

LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING
IN THE OLD NORSE WORLD

VISIT...

LANZAROTE
Caliente.COM

MEDIEVAL TEXTS AND CULTURES OF NORTHERN EUROPE

*Editorial Board under the auspices of the
Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Hull*

Wendy Scase, Chair, *University of Birmingham*
Adrian P. Tudor, Secretary, *University of Hull*

John H. Arnold, *Birkbeck College, University of London*
Julia Barrow, *University of Nottingham*
Lesley A. Coote, *University of Hull*
David Crouch, *University of Hull*
Alan Deighton, *University of Hull*
Alan Hindley, *University of Hull*
Judith Jesch, *University of Nottingham*

Advisory Board

Andrew Ayton, *University of Hull*
David Bagchi, *University of Hull*
Elaine C. Block, *Misericordia International*
Keith Busby, *University of Wisconsin–Madison*
Olle Ferm, *Stockholm University*
Wim Hüsken, *Stedelijke Musea Mechelen*
Gerhard Jaritz, *Central European University, Budapest*
Peter Meredith, *University of Leeds*
Veronica O'Mara, *University of Hull*
Nigel F. Palmer, *St Edmund Hall, Oxford*
Brigitte Schludermann, *University of Hull*
Michel Zink, *Collège de France, Membre de l'Institut*

LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING IN THE OLD NORSE WORLD

Essays in Honour of Margaret Clunies Ross

edited by

Judy Quinn, Kate Heslop, and Tarrin Wills



BREPOLS

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Learning and understanding in the Old Norse world : essays in honour of Margaret Clunies

Ross. - (Medieval texts and cultures of Northern Europe ; 18)

1. Old Norse literature - History and criticism 2. Civilization, Viking 3. Oral tradition - Scandinavia - History

I. Ross, Margaret Clunies II. Quinn, Judy III. Heslop, Kate IV. Wills, Tarrin

839.6'09

ISBN-13: 9782503525808

© 2007, **Brepols Publishers n.v., Turnhout, Belgium**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of the publisher.

D/2007/0095/85

ISBN: 978-2-503-52580-8

Printed in the E.U. on acid-free paper

Fiqlð ek fór, fiqlð ek freistaða,
fiqlð ek reynda regin. (*Vasþrúðnismál* 3)

Much have I travelled, much have I contested,
much have I tested the powers.



Margaret Clunies Ross in the manuscript reading room of Carolina Rediviva, Uppsala, in 1987.

CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations	x
List of Illustrations	xi
Tabula Gratulatoria	xii
Introduction	1
JUDY QUINN	

I. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Old Norse Literature

The Speaking Bodies of Saga Texts	13
JÜRGEN GLAUSER	
The Icelandic Saga as a Kind of Literature with Special Reference to its Representation of Reality	27
VÉSTEINN ÓLASON	
Political Echoes: Reading <i>Eyrbyggja Saga</i> in Light of Contemporary Conflicts	49
TORFI H. TULINIUS	
Structuralist Approaches to Saga Literature	63
LARS LÖNNROTH	

Reconstructing Skaldic Encomia: Discourse Features in Þjóðólfr's 'Magnús verses' DIANA WHALEY	75
---	----

II. Old Norse Myth and Society

How Uniform Was the Old Norse Religion? STEFAN BRINK	105
Óðinn, Warriors, and Death JENS PETER SCHJØDT	137
Myth and Ritual in the <i>Háleygjatal</i> of Eyvindr skáldaspillir RUSSELL POOLE	153
Famous Last Words: Monologue and Dialogue in <i>Hamðismál</i> and the Realization of Heroic Tale JOHN HINES	177

III. Oral Traditions in Performance and Text

* <i>The Immanent Saga of Guðmundr ríki</i> GÍSLI SIGURÐSSON	201
The Art of Poetry and the Sagas of Icelanders GUÐRÚN NORDAL	219
<i>Mansöngur</i> – a Phantom Genre? EDITH MAROLD	239
Skaldic Poetry and Performance STEFANIE WÜRTH	263

IV. Vernacular and Latin Theories of Language

Poetry, Dwarfs, and Gods: Understanding <i>Alvíssmál</i> JOHN LINDOW	285
The Notion of Effeminate Language in Old Norse Literature MATS MALM	305

Ælfric in Iceland	321
KARI ELLEN GADE	

Old Icelandic Grammatical Literature:	341
The Last Two Decades of Research (1983–2005)	
FABRIZIO D. RASCHELLÀ	

V. Prolonged Traditions

The ‘Discourse of Counsel’ and the ‘Translated’ <i>Riddarasögur</i>	375
GERALDINE BARNES	

<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i> : Visions and Versions	399
ANDREW WAWN	

Skanderbeg: An Albanian Hero in Icelandic Clothing	423
M. J. DRISCOLL	

A Bibliography of Margaret Clunies Ross’s Publications	447
ANNA HANSEN	

ABBREVIATIONS

AM	Den Arnamagnæanske Håndskriftsamling (The Arnamagnæan Manuscript Collection), The Arnamagnæan Institute, Copenhagen and The Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík
GKS	Gamle kongelige Samling (The Old Royal Collection), The Royal Library, Copenhagen and The Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík
Holm	The Royal Library, Stockholm
ÍB	Safn Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags, deildar þess í Kaupmannahöfn (The Collection of the Icelandic Literary Society in Copenhagen), The National Library, Reykjavík
ÍBR	Handritasafn Reykjavíkurdeildar Hins íslenska bókmenntafélags (The Collection of the Icelandic Literary Society in Reykjavík), The National Library, Reykjavík
JS	Safn Jóns Sigurðssonar (The Jón Sigurðsson Collection), The National Library, Reykjavík
Lbs	Handritasafn Landsbókasafns Íslands (The National Library Manuscript Collection), The National Library, Reykjavík
NKS	Nye kongelige Samling (The New Royal Collection), The Royal Library, Copenhagen and The Árni Magnússon Institute, Reykjavík
OsloUB	Oslo University Library

ILLUSTRATIONS

Stefan Brink, 'How Uniform Was the Old Norse Religion?'

Figure 1, p. 110. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Freyr.

Figure 2, p. 112. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Óðinn.

Figure 3, p. 114. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Þórr.

Figure 4, p. 117. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the gods Ullr and *Ullinn.

Figure 5, p. 121. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Týr.

John Hines, 'Famous Last Words: Monologue and Dialogue in *Hamðismál* and the Realization of Heroic Tale'

Figure 1, p. 195. House-plans (longhouses) of the Viking Period and immediately post-Viking Period from Iceland and Denmark.

TABULA GRATULATORIA

Christopher Abram
Paul Acker
Joe Allard
Theodore M. Andersson
Anders Andrén
Ármann Jakobsson
Ásdís Egilsdóttir
Sverre Bagge
Massimiliano Bampi
Noriko Banzai
Geraldine Barnes
Marco Battaglia
Stefan Brink
Cambridge University Library,
Cambridge
Department of Anglo-Saxon, Norse,
and Celtic, University of Cambridge
Jayne Carroll
Martin Chase
Michael Chesnutt
Marlene Ciklamini
Carol J. Clover
The Arnamagnæan Institute and
Dictionary, Copenhagen
Margaret Cormack
Fiske Icelandic Collection, Cornell
University Library, Ithaca NY

Carole M. Cusack
Michael Dallapiazza
Helen Damico
Richard Dance
M. J. Driscoll
Ursula Dronke
Gillian Fellows-Jensen
Fulvio Ferrari
Alison Finlay
Simon Forde
Nicoletta Francovich Onesti
Institut für Skandinavistik der Johann
Wolfgang Goethe-Universität
Frankfurt, Frankfurt am Main
Kari Ellen Gade
Gísli Sigurðsson
Jürg Glauser
Skandinavisches Seminar, Universität
Göttingen
J. R. Green
Guðrún Nordal
Jan Ragnar Hagland
Anna Y. Hansen
Victor Hansen
Joseph Harris
Odd Einar Haugen
Yelena Sesselja Helgadóttir Yershova

Helgi Þorláksson
Pernille Hermann
Kate Heslop
Melanie Heyworth
Alfred Hiatt
John Hines
Bengt Holmström
Shaun F. D. Hughes
Peter Hupfauf
Kristina Jennbert
Judith Jesch
Jenny Jochens
Karl G. Johansson
Marianne Kalinke
John Kennedy
Nordisches Institut der Universität
Kiel
Ian Kirby
Liv Kjørsvik Schei
Institut für Nordische Philologie,
Universität zu Köln
Susanne Kramarz-Bein
Riti Kroesen
Hans Kuhn
Beatrice La Farge
Carolyne Larrington
Annette Lassen and Gottskálk
Jensson
John Lindow
Maria Cristina Lombardi
Iris and Lars Lönnroth
Mats Malm
Alfonso Margani
Margrét Eggertsdóttir
Edith Marold
David Matthews
John McKinnell
Rory McTurk

John Megaard
Per Meldahl
Andrea Meregalli
Valeria Micillo
Biblioteca, Università Cattolica del
Sacro Cuore, Milano
Stephen A. Mitchell
Else Mundal
Michael Nelson
Newnham College Library, Cambridge
Agneta Ney
University Library of Southern
Denmark, Odense
Heather O'Donoghue
Dipartimento di Lingue e Letterature
Straniere e Moderne, Università di
Pavia
Patrick Perie
Richard Perkins
Carl Phelpstead
Russell Poole
Judy Quinn
Catharina Raudvere
Fabrizio D. Raschellà
Stofnun Árna Magnússonar í
íslenskum fræðum, Reykjavík
Juanita Feros Ruys
Kees Samplonius
John Scahill
Wendy Scase
Jens Peter Schjødt
Katja Schultz
Klaus von See
Ikuo Shimizu
Dipartimento di Letterature
Moderne e Scienze dei Linguaggi,
Università di Siena
Diane Speed

Gro Steinsland
Svanhildur Oskarsdóttir
Timothy R. Tangherlini
George S. Tate
Bernt Øyvind Thorvaldsen
Torfi H. Tulinius
Matthew Townsend
Louise A. L. Trott
Donald Tuckwiller
Seminariet för Nordisk
 Namnforskning, Uppsala
Vésteinn Ólason

John O. Ward
Lawrence Warner
Andrew Wawn
Diana Whaley
Jonathan Wilcox
Leon Wild
Tarrin Wills
Maria Winkler
Jocelyn Wogan-Browne
Kirsten Wolf
Stefanie Würth
Julia Zernack

INTRODUCTION

Judy Quinn

This volume has been produced to honour Margaret Clunies Ross whose sixty-fifth birthday in 2007 is a milestone in an academic career worthy of celebration, though it signals neither her retirement nor any diminution in her productivity. As the Bibliography of her publications reveals (pp. 447–56), Margaret's work in Old Norse is only one branch of her published scholarship; as well as articles on Old English — on concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England and on the Old English *Rune Poem* — she has made a substantial contribution to Australian Aboriginal studies: in addition to articles on oral traditions and performance and a co-edited collection of Aboriginal songs, she has worked on an award-winning film and collaborated with anthropologists and ethnomusicologists in analysing the dance and song-poetry of Arnhem Land. These other academic interests bear on her work in Old Norse in telling ways, demonstrating her wider view of the medieval subject both ethnographically and theoretically, as well as being testimony to a genuine intellectual breadth which is rare even during these decades of engaged interdisciplinarity.

Margaret's publications in Old Norse range across most of the genres of the literature and address a significant number of the critical issues that have emerged in the field during the last few decades; indeed it has often been through Margaret's work that new perspectives and new areas of research have opened up. Her assiduous desire to understand as fully as possible the complex relationship between Old Norse literature and the society and culture of medieval Iceland drew her to study Scandinavian mythology afresh, the results of which were published in 1994 as *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, volume I: *The Myths*. Four years later the second volume of *Prolonged Echoes*, investigating the medieval reception of the mythology, was published. This ground-breaking work, now the classic textbook on the subject, was informed by

‘the idea that Norse mythology as an entity is an artefact of the human imagination which is and always has been in process of reinterpretation and reformulation’.¹ Central to an understanding of the mythology was also an appreciation of the intellectual context in which one of the principal written sources for it, the *Edda* of Snorri Sturluson, had been formulated, and it was to this subject that Margaret’s first book-length study had been devoted in 1987: *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson’s Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*. Poetics has continued to be a strong interest in Margaret’s research with another monograph, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, published in 2005.

There are other dimensions to Margaret’s research into the interpretation and reinterpretation of Old Norse poetry as well. In 1998 she published *The Norse Muse in Britain, 1750–1820*, a study of the influence of medieval Scandinavian poetry and myth on British literature of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, work which led her to produce a facsimile edition with commentary of *The Old Norse Poetic Translations of Thomas Percy* in 2001 and, three years later (with Amanda Collins), *The Correspondence of Edward Lye*, the eighteenth-century septentrional scholar, as well as a number of entries for the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Her work on the ‘Norse Muse’ developed as part of an international research project, and Margaret has since helped bring into being one of the most significant international collaborative research projects in the history of the discipline: the project to edit the complete corpus of medieval Norse-Icelandic skaldic poetry. Along with her fellow general editors — Kari Gade (Indiana University, USA), Guðrún Nordal (University of Iceland), Edith Marold (University of Kiel, Germany), and Diana Whaley (University of Newcastle, UK) — Margaret is co-ordinating the editorial work of over forty contributing editors from around the world to produce a multi-volume edition to be published by Brepols from 2007 onwards.

She is herself editing over five hundred skaldic stanzas as part of the project, among them the extant oeuvres of two particular poets: the earliest named Scandinavian poet whose work survives, the ninth-century Norwegian Bragi Boddason, and perhaps the most famous of all skaldic poets, the tenth-century Icelander Egill Skallagrímsson. The work of both poets has been an abiding interest of Margaret’s throughout her career. Bragi’s poetry was the subject of her Oxford B.Litt. dissertation and she has recently returned to consider Bragi’s cultural status in an article in the 2006 issue of *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*.

¹ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 8. Full bibliographical references are set out in the Bibliography on pp. 447–56.

Her readings of Bragi's poetry have also fed into an article on skaldic mythological poetry from 1981 and more recent work on Old Norse ekphrasis. Her published work on Egill's poetry spans back to 1978, when she discussed the figure of the poet in *Egils saga* in tandem with an analysis of Egill's poetry, a subject to which she returned in 2001 in a chapter on the genre of the skalds' sagas and in three publications from 2005 and 2006 on issues arising from the editing of his poetry in the context of its preservation in manuscripts of *Egils saga*. In the Preface to her dissertation on Bragi, Margaret observed that 'One cannot afford to be either dogmatic or pusillanimous in the field of skaldic studies, for one runs the risk of making assumptions that are quite unjustifiable on circumstantial grounds in the first case, and, in the second, one feels that there is nothing that can legitimately be said at all'.² I think it is fair to say that Margaret has steered a successful course between dogmatism and pusillanimity over the course of her career, shying away from neither generalization when the detail of her research justifies it nor lucid caution when too much remains unknown to allow a posture of certitude.

Yet another strand to Margaret's research on Old Norse literature and its social context is her engagement with geography: in 1998 she published articles on the regional dynamic of medieval Icelandic literary production and on land-taking and text-making in medieval Iceland. The political dimension of textual production was the focus of an earlier article from 1993, on genealogical structure as a principle of literary organization in early Iceland, which led to a reassessment of saga genres in an article from 1997: 'The Intellectual Complexion of the Icelandic Middle Ages: Towards a New Profile of Old Icelandic Saga Literature'. More recently, she has looked at realism and the fantastic in saga literature in the context of the generic classification of Old Norse sagas. Reassessment is the touchstone of Margaret's scholarship, or as she has put it in the context of trying to understand how the eighteenth century understood Old Norse literature: 'I have tried to take nothing for granted.'³ In the spirit of clear-eyed re-evaluations of literary and historical evidence, Margaret has also edited two important collections of articles in the last decade: *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (2000) and *Old Norse Myths, Literature, and Society* (2003), the former a collection of commissioned work and the latter arising out of papers presented at the Eleventh International Saga Conference in Sydney in 2000. The impulse behind the collection of 2000 echoes the fundamental enquiry at the heart of her own work

² Clunies Ross, 'An Edition of the *Ragnarsdrápa* of Bragi Boddason' (unpublished B.Litt. dissertation, Oxford University, 1973), p. 22.

³ Clunies Ross, *Norse Muse*, p. 20.

on Old Norse literature: 'to explore the complex relationship between the development of a new society and a new polity on the island of Iceland during the Middle Ages, and the literature, in the broadest sense, that Icelanders produced in that period'.⁴ The second collection, focussed on mythology in the context of Old Norse literature and society, is concerned in particular with methodology and foregrounds different disciplinary approaches to the subject, including Margaret's own excursion into theories of ritual. In addition to editing these collections of essays, she has served for many years as a general editor of the Viking Collection (published by the University Press of Southern Denmark) — the pre-eminent English-language monograph series in the field — and, with Geraldine Barnes, she founded the two series 'Making the Middle Ages' and 'Medieval Voyaging' (published by Brepols), both sponsored by the Centre for Medieval Studies at the University of Sydney, of which Margaret is Director.

Margaret's academic career began in Adelaide and continued in Oxford and Copenhagen, but her base for the greater part of her career has been in Sydney, in the English Language and Early English Literature section of the Department of English, which she joined in 1969 as a Lecturer and where she has held the McCaughey Chair since 1990. While the platform of her publications is international, Sydney is marked in important ways on her bibliography: from an early article in the inner-city journal *Refractory Girl* to the second edition of the (co-edited) *Editors' Manual* of the Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages project. In her inaugural lecture of 1993, Margaret presented an institutional history of Old Norse studies in Sydney (published in Sydney in 1994 in a co-edited volume of essays, *Old Norse Studies in the New World*) and in her period of office as President of the Australian Academy of the Humanities in the 1990s, she engaged with public policy-making in Australian higher education and sought to raise the profile of medieval studies and the humanities in general in Australia. Margaret's teacher of Old Norse at Oxford, Gabriel Turville-Petre, once remarked: 'The Australians have many disadvantages, such as lack of books, but I think the future of Icelandic studies in the English-speaking world lies there.'⁵ Turville-Petre's experience of Old Norse in Australia was at the University of Melbourne in 1965 (the University of Sydney in fact has a very good Old Norse collection), but it remains intriguing that the year in which he made this comment, 1969, was the year of Margaret's return to Australia from Europe.

⁴ Clunies Ross, *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, p. 1.

⁵ Quoted and discussed by Clunies Ross in 'Old Norse Studies in Sydney', p. 10.

The continued teaching of Old Norse at undergraduate and graduate levels in the Department of English at the University of Sydney, the establishment of the Centre for Medieval Studies by the University, and an impressive succession of grants from the Australian Research Council to fund Margaret's research are all indications of the success of Old Norse studies in Australia, as is the location in Sydney of the (electronic) powerhouse of the skaldic editing project. All three editors of this volume, Judy Quinn (now of Cambridge University), Kate Heslop (now of the University of Zürich), and Tarrin Wills (soon of the University of Aberdeen) — as well as Anna Hansen, who compiled the bibliography of Margaret's publications — have been research assistants to her at one time or another on grant-funded projects, as well as being her PhD students. If Antipodean scholars of Old Norse have any disadvantage in the early twenty-first century — and that is a moot point — it might be the length of the journey to the north. That too amounts to very little when the intellectual quest spurs the traveller on, as it has often done in Margaret's case. For this reason, the editors chose as the motto for this volume the words of the god Óðinn as he set out to match his knowledge against a giant on the giant's own turf: 'Fiqlð ek fór, fiqlð ek freistaða, fiqlð ek reynda regin' ('Much have I travelled, much have I contested, much have I tested the powers').

The themes of the volume — learning and understanding in the Old Norse world — provide the opportunity to reflect on the nature of knowledge in medieval Iceland, inflected as it was by Latin intellectual traditions and vernacular traditions of learning, as well as on the frames through which it was understood, by the producers of Old Norse literature in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in particular, but also by successive generations down to our own. The number of people who might have contributed to a festschrift for Margaret is far greater than those represented here; in inviting contributions to this volume we defined five principal areas Margaret has pursued in her own research and identified scholars who have worked with her in each of them:

- I. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Old Norse Literature
- II. Old Norse Myth and Society
- III. Oral Traditions in Performance and Text
- IV. Vernacular and Latin Theories of Language
- V. Prolonged Traditions

Old Norse studies have changed apace during the span of Margaret's career, the implications of the traditional discipline of philology playing themselves out in combination with old and new fields such as archaeology, anthropology, the study of oral cultures, the history of religions, semiotics, performance studies, and

reception theory as well as critical theories of other kinds. Margaret's first publication was in fact in the field of medieval archaeology, and the influence of anthropology is manifest in her understanding of Old Norse mythology. Not surprisingly, theoretical considerations emerge in most of the essays in this volume, but they are foregrounded in the first section in which Jürg Glauser, Vésteinn Ólason, Torfi Tulinius, Lars Lönnroth, and Diana Whaley examine the interpretive frameworks for Old Norse literature from a number of different angles.

Glauser's essay, 'The Speaking Bodies of Saga Texts', demonstrates how recent German scholarship on 'mediality' in the medieval period can illuminate our understanding of Old Norse texts. He advocates turning aside from the conventional dichotomies of Old Norse scholarship — paganism and Christianity, orality and literacy — to engage with the complex ways in which cultural memory might have worked in medieval Icelandic literature. One of the key scenes of saga literature Glauser focuses on, the death of Njáll, is also the subject of analysis in Vésteinn Ólason's essay, 'The Icelandic Saga as a Kind of Literature'. Vésteinn discusses the ongoing debate over the genres and modes of saga literature with particular reference to the representation of reality and the supernatural in the sagas. He argues that sagas with a high degree of realism have an added depth or polysemy that derives in part from the conflicting textual forces at work in them. Aspects of the fantastic also catch Torfi Tulinius's attention when he investigates the possible political context for the colourful episode of the hauntings at the farm of Fróðá ('Political Echoes: Reading *Eyrbyggja Saga* in Light of Contemporary Conflicts'). He explores the possibility that contemporary power struggles between chieftains and the clergy in thirteenth-century Iceland might have informed the telling of the story, the wonders of Fróðá being in a dialogic relationship with popular accounts of Bishop Guðmundr's ability to deal with supernatural challenges. The importance of recognizing the way oral traditions — both ancient and recent — play into saga composition and interpretation is a theme taken up again in Section III by Gísli Sigurðsson.

The impact of structuralism on Old Norse saga studies, which is contextualized in Glauser's account of subsequent theoretical approaches to medieval texts, is addressed in detail in Lars Lönnroth's essay, 'Structuralist Approaches to Saga Literature'. As Lönnroth shows, structuralism has informed saga scholarship since the 1880s but made the greatest impact in the 1960s and 1970s with the work of Andersson, Harris, Allen, and Clover. While the strictly applied schematic analysis of narrative may have become obsolete as a methodology, Lönnroth puts the advances made by structuralist work on sagas into historical perspective and explores the insights the approach afforded. In the last essay of this section, atten-

tion is turned to skaldic poetry, and in particular the fundamental methodological problems involved in the reconstruction of whole poems from fragmentary evidence. In ‘Reconstructing Skaldic Encomia: Discourse Features in Þjóðólfr’s “Magnús verses”’, Diana Whaley presents a thorough analysis of the discourse features of verses attributed to *Magnúsflokkur* and establishes a kind of matrix with which to determine the inclusion or exclusion of verses in an editorially reconstructed poem. Her model, which takes full account of skaldic compositional flexibility, presents an important methodological advance as well as shedding light on the history of skaldic editing and our understanding of skaldic composition. Whaley draws attention to our imperfect knowledge of skaldic performance in medieval Scandinavia, a topic that Glauser also alludes to and which is taken up again in Section III in Stefanie Würth’s essay.

Section II, on Old Norse Myth and Society, plumbs the distant past in order to sound out new ways of understanding the mythology of pre-Christian Scandinavia through place-name studies, the history of religions, and detailed analysis of skaldic and eddic poetry. In ‘How Uniform Was the Old Norse Religion?’ Stefan Brink presents a detailed distribution analysis across mainland Scandinavia of place-names preserving the name of a god. His research reveals that there were only a few cults of gods and even fewer cults of goddesses in Scandinavia, and some of them were distinctly regional. Brink’s conclusion, that pagan beliefs and practices in early Scandinavia were not homogeneous, has important implications for the study of the mythology that is preserved in written texts from medieval Iceland. The complex and often contradictory textual evidence relating to the god Óðinn in these sources is treated by Jens Peter Schjødt in his essay, ‘Óðinn, Warriors, and Death’. With due circumspection, he attempts to see the inherent logic in the clusters of associated motifs involving the god found in certain sagas and in *Snorra Edda* in order to draw a picture of how and why he might have been venerated by warriors and kings.

The latter two essays in this section focus on extant poems as windows onto recoverable social and cultural practices of the Viking Age. In ‘Myth and Ritual in the *Háleygjatal* of Eyvindr skáldaspillir’, Russell Poole examines the way in which the skaldic poem *Háleygjatal* expresses distinctive mythic traditions that seem to have spread northwards along the coast of Norway through migration. His reading of the poem helps to contextualize the sense of political and cultural separateness that manifested itself in the ‘heathen reaction’ of the Earls of Hlaðir to Christianity. Poole’s detailed explication of the meaning of the poem also provides evidence that some of the myths alluded to by the poet were variants not found outside Hálogaland, reinforcing Brink’s findings about the variegated

nature of pre-Christian beliefs across Scandinavia. Archaeological evidence is used to help elucidate lines from the eddic poem *Hamðismál* in John Hines's 'Famous Last Words: Monologue and Dialogue in *Hamðismál* and the Realization of Heroic Tale', a detailed account of the poem's speech-acts as well as an assessment of its possible cultural meaning to a medieval audience. Hines draws attention to the 'performativity' of the poem, especially in contrast to the skaldic ekphrastic poem *Ragnarsdrápa* which also tells the story of Hamðir and Sǫrli and the death of Írmunrekkr. Such a focus leads nicely into the central section of the volume, on oral traditions in performance and text.

The significance of oral traditions for the narratives of Icelandic family sagas is the subject of Gísli Sigurðsson's essay, '*The Immanent Saga of Guðmundr ríki'. In order to show how saga authors presupposed a high degree of additional knowledge on the part of their audiences, Gísli draws together the biographical details of one of the political players of tenth-century Iceland, arguing that the audiences of written sagas were likely to have had a similar composite picture of him drawn from shared memories orally transmitted down the centuries. Noting that skaldic poetry quoted within sagas of Icelanders is the most distinctly oral legacy of the settlement period in Iceland, Guðrún Nordal uses the evidence of quoted verse as the basis for a reclassification of the corpus in 'The Art of Poetry and the Sagas of Icelanders'. Her conclusion is that the choice of verse in the sagas does not seem to depend on the time of writing (though dating saga composition is by no means a straightforward matter), but appears to have been influenced by geographical, thematic, or narratological preferences. Guðrún's analysis contributes a valuable dimension to our understanding of the generic complexity of saga literature and to the differing attitudes of writers to vernacular oral traditions.

In a reassessment of the use of the term 'mansǫngr' in medieval Iceland, Edith Marold's essay, '*Mansǫngr* – a Phantom Genre?', dispels some tenacious misconceptions and distinguishes between references to love poetry in religious circles (where the term 'mansǫngr' is likely to have been calqued on the Latin *cantus puellarum*) and the skaldic tradition of love poetry. The comprehensibility of skaldic poetry is the subject of Stefanie Würth's essay, 'Skaldic Poetry and Performance'. Her aim is to gather evidence of skaldic performances from extant sources and to probe the relationship between skald and audience as it is represented in saga narratives. Her inclination is to stress the importance of learned hermeneutics in the written transmission of the poems, an attitude that is also explored by some of the contributors to the next section.

Section IV, on language theory in vernacular tradition and in Latin scholarship, opens with an essay by John Lindow, 'Poetry, Dwarfs, and Gods: Understanding

Alvíssmál in which he argues for a particular association between dwarfs and Óðinn, an interpretation with important implications beyond the poem itself. Lindow analyses the kind of learning Alvíss's knowledge of vocabulary exhibits — he is a 'know-it-all' rather than 'all-wise' — and in doing so points up the distinction between learning and understanding that is the failing of the dwarf but, it is hoped, the ready attainment of readers of this volume. Indeed Lindow's definition of *fræði* serves as a byline to one of the themes of the festschrift: 'knowledge of the origin, extent, and details of the space in which events play themselves out', describing scholarly terrain just as well as it does geographical and mythological space.

In 'The Notion of Effeminate Language in Old Norse Literature', Mats Malm further explores native conceptions of language in his investigation of the suspiciousness apparent in classical rhetoric towards ornate or passionate language and the inference that it tends towards the effeminate. Malm considers what evidence there is of a gendered notion of language in the Old Norse rhetorical treatises and some other texts, concluding that ornate poetic diction was in fact closely associated with power and manliness in medieval Iceland. Continuing the investigation into the influence of Latin learning on vernacular traditions, Kari Gade mounts a detailed case for knowledge of Ælfric's grammar in Iceland prior to the writing of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, learning most probably circulated by lecture notes, glosses, and teaching materials. In pursuing this line of enquiry, Gade follows a hypothesis presented by Margaret Clunies Ross twenty years ago in her work on *Skáldskaparmál*, a work which has also stimulated debate more broadly in regard to Old Icelandic treatises on grammar and rhetoric. To close this section, Fabrizio Raschellà provides a survey of recent scholarship in this area, with particular reference to broader trends in linguistic history. In common with a number of other contributions, his examination brings to light the often distinctive national patterns of scholarship in the field of Old Norse, making surveys of this nature a particularly important resource.

Influences on vernacular learning in the medieval period and the influence of vernacular traditions in the post-medieval period are the subjects of the final section on reception. In 'The "Discourse of Counsel" and the "Translated" *Riddarasögur*', Geraldine Barnes takes another learned tradition, that of the *Fürstenspiegel*, and examines how its concern with the proper exercise of secular authority has been incorporated into saga narratives. Barnes observes that the medieval discourse of counsel continued to be of interest in post-Reformation Iceland, and it is on this period that the final two essays concentrate. Andrew Wawn explores the post-medieval meanings of one of the sagas of Icelanders in his

essay '*Vatnsdæla saga*: Visions and Versions', focussing on three modern responses, by Sabine Baring-Gould, Halldór Briem, and Benjamin Eiríksson. The meanings generated by the saga are indeed many and they reflect intriguingly on their times as well as demonstrating the power of the medieval narrative to generate new versions. The creativity of the saga and *rímur* traditions — and the readiness to adapt learned and popular works from abroad into these traditional genres — is demonstrated by Matthew Driscoll in the final essay of the collection, 'Skanderbeg: An Albanian Hero in Icelandic Clothing'. Indeed Driscoll's account serves as confirmation of Wawn's characterization of the reception of Old Norse literature as 'a willingness to think the unthinkable — or at least the unthought'.

Critical awareness of both the complex nature of medieval learning and the historically contingent nature of understanding Old Norse texts has been the hallmark of Margaret Clunies Ross's scholarship. Continuing to explore these themes and engaging with Margaret's own work on an array of subjects — both in this publication and in the discussions and further scholarship that it will stimulate — is the most fitting form of tribute to her. Through their elucidation of the ways in which both vernacular (often oral) traditions of learning and Latin scholarship need to be reckoned with in interpreting Old Norse texts, and of the manifold ways Old Norse texts have been understood down through the centuries, it is hoped the contributions to this volume significantly enhance our understanding of the Old Norse world.

I. Theoretical Frameworks for Understanding Old Norse Literature

THE SPEAKING BODIES OF SAGA TEXTS

Jürg Glauser

translated by Kate Heslop

While still a young deacon, Jón Ögmundarson — later the first Bishop of Hólar, and canonized in 1200 — pays a visit to the Danish king on his way back from a pilgrimage to Rome. It is Palm Sunday, and Jón attends Mass. The second chapter of *Jóns saga helga* describes the following event, which takes place during the service:

Ok er hann kemr pálsunnudag í þann stað er konungrinn var fyrir, þá var þat þar tíðenda at konungr var at messu, en prestur sá er syngja skyldi messuna hóf upp at lesa passio í því er inn helgi Jón kom í kirkjuna. En honum gekk lestrinn seint ok tregliga, en mǫnnum þótti þungt ok höfugt at hlýða, þeim er hjá stóðu. En er inn helgi Jón fann þat at prestinn var næsta gǫrr at fyrirsjón af mǫnnum, þá leggr inn helgi Jón stólu yfir herðar sér ok gengr at prestinum ok tók bókina ór hendi honum með lítillæti ok las passiona svá skǫruliga ok skynsamliga er allir undruðusk, þeir er við váru staddir. Ok er lokit var tíðunum, þá sendir konungr eptir honum ok býðr honum til sín ok bað hann með sér lengi vera, ok lagði á hann svá mikla virðing at hann setti hann it næsta sér sjálfum ok þótti mikit undir at hann dvelðisk með honum lengr en skemmr, ok dvalðisk hann með honum um stundar sakir.

(And when he was come to the place where the king was, it was then told him that the king was at mass. But the priest that was to sing the mass began to read the Passion as the holy John came into the church. But he read the lesson so slowly and with such difficulty that they that stood by thought it heavy and wearisome to hear. But when the holy John found that the priest was well-nigh become a laughing-stock to men, then he laid a stole over his shoulders, and walked up to the priest and took the book out of his hand in lowly fashion, and read the Passion so nobly and clearly that all they that stood by marvelled. And when the service was over the king sent after him, and bade him stay a long while with him, and paid him so great honour that he put him next himself, and was pleased that he should stay with him as long as he would, and indeed he stayed with him a good while.)¹

¹ *Biskupa sögur* I, ed. by Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, 2 vols, Íslensk fornrit, 15 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), II, 184–86. English translation

This small episode from a thirteenth-century Icelandic bishop's saga highlights a specifically medieval communicative situation, at least two aspects of which may be said to be particular to the Middle Ages. For one, what is described here is a performance, an actual staging of a text. For another, the scene makes it clear that in this represented performance, writing is not to be dissociated from the presence of a body. This is all the more remarkable considering that the text in question is the *Passio*: here aura does not emanate from the book as such, as it usually does when written objects are depicted in other hagiographic texts. Rather, script (in the present instance of *Jóns saga*, Holy Scripture) has to rely upon performance, which is the exclusive domain of the human body and its voice. So in the final analysis a body, equipped with a particular aura, determines whether the communicative event is felicitous or not. At the same time, this passage also lays bare how a text conceived in writing adapts itself to the communicative relationships characteristic of orality and, so to speak, constitutes a 'mediated expansion and continuation of personal possibilities':² the manner in which writing is staged determines its effect, and the performative act and rhetorical skills of the auratic soon-to-be saint are necessary, so that literature — 'between writing and the body', as Christian Kiening has formulated it³ — can come to life in the intended way.

In an article from 1997, Margaret Clunies Ross rightly observed that international saga research since the 1960s has been strongly influenced by formal(ist) and structural(ist) conceptions.⁴ Because of this, saga research has for many decades taken an attitude towards the text which Kiening, following and extending the terminology developed by Rainer Warning, characterizes as 'analysis'. A chief concern of structuralism, as is well known, is the objectifiability of its results, which is to be guaranteed by an appropriate analysis. Structuralism understands

from *Origines Islandicae*, ed. and trans. by Gudbrand Vigfusson and F. York Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), I, 541. I would like to thank Ellen Peters for drawing my attention to this passage.

² '[M]ediale Erweiterung und Fortsetzung von personellen Möglichkeiten': Horst Wenzel, 'Medien- und Kommunikationstheorie: Ältere deutsche Literatur', in *Germanistik als Kulturwissenschaft: Eine Einführung in neue Theoriekonzepte*, ed. by Claudia Benthien and Hans Rudolf Velten (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2002), pp. 125–51 (p. 132).

³ Christian Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift: Texte vor dem Zeitalter der Literatur* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 2003).

⁴ Margaret Clunies Ross, 'The Intellectual Complexion of the Icelandic Middle Ages: Toward a New Profile of Old Icelandic Saga Literature', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69 (1997), 443–53.

the literary text as a regularly patterned series of signs.⁵ According to this conception the analysis of a text aims — among other things — to penetrate the heterogeneous surface of the text in order to define abstract recurrences and similarities lying on deeper narrative levels; that is, relationships of identity. So, for example, Theodore M. Andersson, in his influential study *The Icelandic Family Saga*, deploys a rhetorically convincing and highly attractive paradigm in order to trace the plots of all the sagas of Icelanders back to a basic pattern observable in each individual text.⁶ This critical tendency, whose influence in saga studies reached a late climax with the publication in 1986 of the collection *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature*, believed that the meaning of a literary statement is only accessible via a precise analysis of its narrative structure.⁷ In the same 1997 article Clunies Ross also observed that saga scholarship, not least because of its structuralist orientation, has largely concentrated its efforts on one mode, one genre, and one period: the apparently realistic ‘classical’ sagas of Icelanders of the thirteenth century. And she predicted that this same scholarship would adopt a more strongly pluralist definition of the saga, which would lead to the inclusion of other groups of sagas, other narrative modes, and other periods. These emergent openings in the way we deal with saga texts may, following Kiening once again, be characterized as two alternative attitudes to the text: *Lektüre* (‘reading’) and *Beschreibung* (‘description’).⁸ These can overlap one another to a considerable extent and neither need foreclose the other.

‘Readings’, indebted methodologically to post-structuralism, traverse the text, homing in upon a few elements and exposing the text’s rhetorical complexity and semantic unexhaustability; they are, above all, more interested in difference and less in identity. Compared to structuralist analyses, post-structuralist readings set out from a less closed concept of the text and call numerous elements of traditional philology and literary history such as author, text, and genre into question. Genre, for example, is a concept drawn from nineteenth-century literary

⁵ Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift*, pp. 27–28.

⁶ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 28 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967). A similar conception underpinned my own *Isländische Märchensagas: Studien zur Prosaliteratur im spätmittelalterlichen Island*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, 12 (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1983).

⁷ *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986).

⁸ Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift*, pp. 27–28.

scholarship which, as many studies of recent years have shown, cannot do justice to the deeply hybrid form of the saga. It has increasingly given way to the concepts of mode and modality, which inter alia allow individual lines of tradition in the text, stemming from completely different 'genres' (the fantastic, for example), to be described in a more differentiated fashion.⁹ A new interest, often associated with the New Philology, in the material processes of transmission in medieval manuscript culture has meant abandoning the notion of a stable text and instead foregrounding the lack of fixity, the variance and seriality (*mouvance, variance*) of the medieval text. By the same token, the concept of originality has been more and more interrogated in the course of these discussions and has come to be supplanted by the conception of a series of manuscript versions of the text, generated by the transmission and by processes of rewriting,¹⁰ and in themselves of equal worth. Performativity plays a central role in this context, as medieval texts are understood as communicative acts.¹¹ As time passes, the literary-historical implications of the insights of New Philology and material philology can hardly be denied, even in the case of saga studies: the question is merely what consequences Old Norse textual editors and literary historians will or can draw from them.¹²

⁹ Clunies Ross, for example, speaks of 'multiple modalities' as a characteristic of saga literature ('Intellectual Complexion', p. 449).

¹⁰ See for example Jón Karl Helgason, *The Rewriting of Njáls Saga: Translation, Ideology and Icelandic Sagas*, Topics in Translation, 16 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999).

¹¹ Compare Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift*, p. 26.

¹² Compare the article of Sverrir Tómasson, 'Er nýja textafræðin ný? Þankar um gamla fræðigrein', *Gripla*, 13 (2002), 199–216. Thomas Bein draws attention to the following paradoxical situation in German medieval studies: 'es tut sich eine eigenartige Kluft auf: die Editoren stellen dem Literaturhistoriker mehr und mehr Texte zur Verfügung, deren Basis um Jahre bis Jahrzehnte jünger ist als die mutmaßliche Entstehung dieser Texte. Der Literaturhistoriker aber verwendet diese modern edierten Texte in aller Regel nicht, um etwas über die Zeit ihrer handschriftlichen Aufzeichnung auszusagen, sondern er will etwas über ihren Autor und sein Publikum und über das ganze literarische Leben zur Zeit der Entstehung der Texte herausfinden' ('a strange gulf opens: editors put at literary historians' disposal more and more texts whose textual basis is years or decades younger than the presumed origin of these texts. The literary historian, however, generally does not use these modern edited texts in order to say something about the time when the manuscripts were written down, but rather wants to find out something about the authors and their publics and literary life in general at the time of the origin of the texts'). *Germanistische Mediävistik: Eine Einführung*, 2nd rev. edn, Grundlagen der Germanistik, 35 (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005), pp. 112–13.

Finally, ‘description’, a mode of reading influenced by cultural studies, traces the logic, rules, and coherences of a text,¹³ and is as such somewhat comparable with structuralism. However, such studies are more interested in history and culture and understand these terms — ‘history’ and ‘culture’ — in an almost metatextual fashion. The descriptive approach, influenced as it is by ethnology¹⁴ and historical anthropology, often concerns itself with the relationship of a text to its contexts. Like ‘readings’, ‘descriptions’ too can help to break down rigid dichotomizations in our approach to saga literature — say the opposing pairs of oral tradition versus literacy or paganism versus Christianity¹⁵ — and lead to new emphases on the dialogical¹⁶ and on alterity¹⁷ and interculturality in Old Icelandic literary culture. And these approaches also link text and performance, see elements of representation, ritual, and ceremonial in written texts, and refer to the ‘mutual referentiality of material writing and corporeally-bound words’.¹⁸

The three approaches I have briefly sketched in idealized form here — analyses, readings, and descriptions — are by no means only of relevance to the German medievalism from which Kiening takes his examples. Rather, they also precisely characterize the individual phases, developments, and current state of saga

¹³ The label ‘description’ is of course drawn from the metaphor of ‘thick description’ used by the ethnologist Clifford Geertz (‘Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture’, in his *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–30). For Icelandic medieval literature, see for example Gísli Pálsson, ‘Fortíðin sem framandi land: Íslenskar fornbókmenntir í ljósi mannfræðinnar’, *Skírnir*, 171 (1997), 37–63.

¹⁴ Cf. Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift*, p. 28.

¹⁵ See for example Torfi H. Tulinius, *Skáldið í skrifinni: Snorri Sturluson og Egils saga* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag/ReykjavíkúAkademían, 2004). Torfi’s own practice — ‘að líta á söguna sem forngrip sem setja þarf í upprunalegt samhengi’ (p. 230; ‘to regard the saga as an ancient relic which needs to be placed in its original context’) — corresponds precisely with the procedures of New Historicism; cf. for example Stefanie Würth, ‘New Historicism und altnordische Literaturwissenschaft’, in *Verhandlungen mit dem New Historicism: Das Text-Kontext-Problem in der Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. by Jürg Glauser and Annegret Heitmann (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1999), pp. 193–208.

¹⁶ See for example Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders*, trans. by Andrew Wawn (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 1998).

¹⁷ See for example E. A. Willimsen, ‘Boundaries of Difference in the Vinland Sagas’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 77 (2005), 451–78.

¹⁸ ‘[W]echselseitige Referenzialität von materieller Schrift und körpergebundenem Wort’: Wenzel, ‘Medien- und Kommunikationstheorie’, p. 132.

research.¹⁹ In what follows, the concepts of *memory* and *mediality* will be examined somewhat more closely in light of two Old Norse passages, so as to illustrate these emerging tendencies towards new openings in our treatment of older texts.

The second part of *Njáls saga* relates the well-known episode in which Njáll's house Bergþórshváll is surrounded by a band of attackers and set alight (ch. 129). Njáll and his wife Bergþóra decline the safe conduct out of the already burning house that the assailants offer, Njáll describing himself as too old to revenge his sons, the targets of the attack, and Bergþóra saying she will not leave her husband: "Ek var ung gefin Njáli, ok hefi ek því heitit honum, at eitt skyldi ganga yfir okkr bæði" ("I was young when I was given to Njal, and I promised him that we should both share the same fate"). To her question "Hvat skulu vit nú til ráða taka?" ("What are we to do now?"), Njáll answers, "Ganga munu vit til hvílu okkarrar ok leggjask niðr" ("We will go to our bed and lie down"). Before they lie down in their bed to await death, Njáll instructs his foreman (*bryti*), "Nú skaltú sjá, hvar vit leggjumsk niðr ok hversu ek býg um okkr, því at ek ætla mér hvergi heðan at hrærask, hvárt sem mér angrar reykr eða bruni; munt þú þá næst geta, hvar beina okkarra er at leita" ("Now you must see where we lie down and how I lay us out, for I don't intend to budge from this spot, no matter how much the smoke and the fire hurt me; then you will know where our remains can be found"). The foreman assures him he will do this and gets away to safety, while Njáll, Bergþóra, and their grandson, who does not want to be separated from his grandmother, succumb to the flames under an oxhide.²⁰

Njáll, as an old, wise, but nevertheless not immodest man, is aware that the manner of his death will have an impact on his posthumous reputation and that the discovery of the corpse is part of this. His instructions to the foreman are intended to ensure that the place of his death will be found. Although this small scene is only mentioned in passing as the attack unfolds and the text itself does not comment any further on it, Njáll seems virtually to be alluding here to the

¹⁹ Compare Stefanie Würth's account in 'Kulturwissenschaftliche Ansätze in der Mediävistik', in *Neue Ansätze in der Mittelalterphilologie – Nye veier i middelalderfilologien: Akten der skandinavistiske Arbeitstagung in Münster vom 24. bis 26. Oktober 2002*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Germanistik und Skandinavistik, 55 (Frankfurt: Lang, 2005), pp. 57–69.

²⁰ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1954), p. 330. English translation from 'Njal's Saga', trans. by Robert Cook, in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson, 5 vols (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997), III, 1–220 (p. 156).

founding anecdote of classical memorial technology. This famous story concerns the Greek poet Simonides of Ceos, who was able to identify the disfigured bodies of the other guests after the hall collapsed during a banquet he was attending, thanks to his having memorized the seating arrangement. Like the Greek Simonides in the sixth century B.C., the Icелander Njáll in the autumn of the year 1010 or 1011, when according to *Njáls saga* he lost his life, realizes that memory is best constructed on the basis of place (*locus*): ‘Simonides dicitur ex eo quod meminisset quo eorum loco quisque cubuisset demonstrator uniuscuiusque sepeliendi fuisse; hac tum re admonitus invenisse fertur ordinem esse maxime qui memoriae lumen afferret’ (‘the story goes that Simonides was enabled by his recollection of the place in which each of them had been reclining at table to identify them for separate interment; and that this circumstance suggested to him the discovery of the truth that the best aid to clearness of memory consists in orderly arrangement’), as Cicero writes.²¹

Snorri Sturluson also demonstrates how memory is pre-eminently associated with spatial modes of thought, pointing out in the prologue to *Heimskringla* that the poems *Ynglingatal* and *Háleygjatal*, which form the basis of his presentation of the early history of Norway, mention not only the circumstances and causes of the deaths of kings but also their burial places.²² Graves and barrows (*legstaðir* and *haugstaðir*) are the media from which memory is constituted: it is around them that the memory of the dead princes crystallizes. Other prologues, mainly those of translated works or works that are probably translations, emphasize the significance of writing for the safeguarding of transmission and recollection more strongly than does Snorri. In the *Forræða* of *Strengleikar*, for example, we are told of stories which ‘margfroðer menn gærðo [...] ok a bocom leto rita. til ævenlægrar aminningar’ (‘men of great learning [...] had written down in books as an

²¹ *De oratore* II, lxxxvi, §353, in *Cicero in Twenty-eight Volumes. III. De oratore in Two Volumes. I. Books I, II*, ed. by H. Rackham, trans. by E. W. Sutton, Loeb Classical Library, 348 (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), pp. 466, 467. On this passage, taken up by Quintilian, among others (M. Fabii Quintiliani, *Institutionis oratoriae libri XII*, XI, 2, §§11–51), see also the following, which is of particular importance for the present discussion: ‘Der Schock des Vergessens: Die Gründungslegende der kulturellen Mnemotechnik’, in Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, 2nd rev. edn (Munich: Beck, 1997), pp. 215–22.

²² [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslensk fornrit, 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), I, 3–7.

everlasting reminder’).²³ And the prologue to *Þiðreks saga af Bern* thematizes the function of written transmission in the conservation and circulation of historical knowledge in a thorough and differentiated fashion: ‘ef menn vilja kunna vkunnar sögur og lángr þa er betur, og geingur síður or minne ath ritadar see’ (‘if people want to learn unfamiliar and long narratives, it works better and they leave the memory more slowly if they are written down’).²⁴

In saga literature it is first and foremost the landscape and the events localized in it which play the decisive role as guarantors of memory. Narratives like *Egils saga* and *Grettis saga* are inseparably bound to Icelandic topography and undertake a wide-ranging literary mapping of the country, a semioticization of space. In the final analysis the most important memory spaces are the manuscripts which preserve the literature themselves. Codices such as the main manuscript of the *Poetic Edda* (described by Vésteinn Ólason as ‘some kind of a tombstone on the grave of the traditional heroic lay’²⁵), *Mǫðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol), *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol), and the manuscripts of individual sagas (for example, of the rapidly and widely disseminated *Njáls saga*) are ‘textual arenas’, in which the decisive events of Icelandic history are represented in authoritative form. In these textual memory spaces, time (in the opposition, significant for the history of religion and mentality, between *þá* ‘then’ and *nú* ‘now’), space (as mapped and semioticized landscape and as diverse loci of memory), and origin (with the stress on mythic beginnings and on a genealogical model for the construction of origins) work together and guarantee that narratives can convey meaning from the time of the forefathers into the present, and therefore that they are preserved. These elements are key to the concept of ‘cultural memory’ elaborated by the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann in his studies of texts from the ancient world. At least in German-language scholarship, ‘memory’ has become a central concept in contemporary literary and cultural studies, so much so that a ‘mnemonic turn’ has been spoken of, and this interdisciplinary research project christened, in a neologism of remarkable length even by the standards of German academic terminology,

²³ *Strengleikar: An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais*, ed. by Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, Norsk Historisk Kjeldekrift-institutt: Norrøne tekster, 3 (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldekrift-institutt, 1979), pp. 4, 5.

²⁴ *Þiðreks saga af Bern*, ed. by Henrik Bertelsen, 2 vols, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 34 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1905–11), I, 1; translation my own.

²⁵ Vésteinn Ólason, ‘Heusler and the Dating of Eddic Poetry – with Special Reference to “isländische Nachblüte der Heldendichtung”’, in *Germanentum im Fin de siècle: Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien zum Werk Andreas Heuslers*, ed. by Jürg Glauser and Julia Zernack, Studien zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Basel, n.s., 3 (Basel: Schwabe, 2005), pp. 165–93 (p. 189).

‘erinnerungskulturwissenschaftliche Literaturwissenschaft’ (‘cultural memory studies of literature’).²⁶ As the small selection above of examples from the sagas shows, the two entities ‘literature’ and ‘memory’ may be brought into contact at several different levels, insofar as one can take as one’s starting point the memory *of* literature, memory *in* literature, and literature *as medium of* memory: the memory of literature consists above all in literary intertextuality; the memory that is expressed in literary texts does so in the form of representations of memory; and finally, literature can itself mediate memory and participate in a memorial culture.²⁷ What is especially important in relation to Old Norse literature is the fact that literature may potentially codify diverse versions of the past. Literary texts can accordingly play a prominent role in the founding, recording, transmission, and dissemination of collective memories or myths, but simultaneously the possibility exists for fictional texts to take up alternative versions of the past, the outlines of ‘counter-memories’.²⁸ In view of the fundamentally mythic character of Icelandic culture in the Middle Ages, this is of no small significance.²⁹ A more nuanced engagement with these literary phenomena from the perspective of cultural memory studies, in tandem with the growing interest in the later phases of saga transmission, could lead to a liberation from the monocausal-final, so to speak teleological, paradigm of literary history and, not least important, from the obsession with dating which dogs much saga research. A suspension of the dichotomization of referential and non-referential readings in the light of these concerns would make it possible to see the sagas too as ‘texts in action’.

With his death, Njáll communicates a message to posterity. In addition to the spatialization of memory, *Njáls saga* seizes upon another means of safeguarding the memory of its protagonist (ch. 132). As people are looking through the debris left behind by the devastating arson, they find the bodies of Njáll, Bergþóra, and

²⁶ Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, ‘Literaturwissenschaftliche Konzepte von Gedächtnis: Ein einführender Überblick’, in *Gedächtniskonzepte der Literaturwissenschaft: Theoretische Grundlegung und Anwendungsperspektiven*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning, Media and Cultural Memory/Medien und kulturelle Erinnerung, 2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 1–9 (pp. 4, 6).

²⁷ See Erll and Nünning, ‘Literaturwissenschaftliche Konzepte’, pp. 2–5.

²⁸ See Erll and Nünning, ‘Literaturwissenschaftliche Konzepte’, pp. 6–7.

²⁹ See on this Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols, Viking Collection, 7, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994–98); also Pernille Hermann, ‘*Íslendingabók* and History’, in *Reflections on Old Norse Myths*, ed. by Pernille Hermann, Jens Peter Schjødt, and Rasmus Trandum Kristensen (forthcoming); and Vésteinn Ólason’s idea, in his *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, that the sagas of Icelanders open a dialogue between the Middle Ages and the Viking Age and between the Middle Ages and modernity.

the little boy under the oxhide. Only the boy's finger is charred where he poked it out from under the hide. "Líkami Bergþóru þykki mér at líkendum ok þó vel" ("Bergthora's body is as I would have expected, though well preserved"), says Hjalti Skeggjason, a figure endowed with much authority in the Icelandic society of the turn of the millenium, who is introduced as witness and transmission bearer. "En Njáls ásjána ok líkami sýnisk mér svá bjartr, at ek hefi engan dauðs manns líkama sét jafnbjartan." Allir sögðu, at svá væri' ("Njál's countenance and body are radiant, and I've never seen such radiance in a dead man's body." They all agreed that this was so').³⁰ His virtually unscathed, brightly shining body naturally gives Njáll a touch of the legendary, draws his death close to being a Christian martyrdom, and substantially contributes to the glorification of the deceased. The old man Njáll thereby triumphs in death over the adversaries on whom he could no longer be revenged in life. Njáll's almost unharmed corpse is one of many speaking bodies in the sagas. His dead body is present, it delivers a message, and it is itself the medium of that message. The presence of the dead body — which Njáll providently saw to by his instructions to the *bryti* — guarantees that communication can be felicitous by other means than those of language.

As a contrast to these two felicitous communicative acts in *Jóns saga helga* and *Njáls saga*, I will finally briefly consider a case of failed communication. The failure of this communication is closely tied to the absence of a body to mediate the message. Chapter 35 of *Völsunga saga* in the manuscript NKS 1824 b 4° bears the title 'Guðrun reist runnar'³¹ ('Guðrún cut runes') and tells of Guðrún's unsuccessful attempt to warn her brothers Gunnarr and Högni of the treacherous nature of her husband Atli's invitation to them:

Sa madr var fyrir þeim, er Vingi er nefndr. Drottninginn veit nu þeirra einmæli, ok grunar, at vera mune velar vid bræðr hennar. Guðrun rístr runar, ok hun tekr einn gullhring ok knytr i vargshar ok fer þetta i hendr sendimonnum konungs. Síðan foru þeir eptir konungs bode. Ok adr þeir stige a land, sa Vingi runarnar ok sneri a adra leid ok, at Guðrun fyste i runum, at þeir kvæme a hans fund. [. . .] Haugne svarar: '[. . .] ok þat undrumzt ek, er ek sa giorsimar þer, er Atli konungr sendi ockr, at ek sa vargshare knyt i einn gullhring, ok ma vera, at Guðrunu þicki hann ulfshug vid ockr hafa, ok vili hun eigi, at vid farim.' Vingi synir honum nu runnarnar þer, er hann kvad Guðrunu sent hafa. [. . .] Þa geck at kona Haugna, er het Kostbera, kvenna friduzt, ok leit a runarnar. [. . .] Tekr

³⁰ *Brennu-Njáls saga*, p. 343; *Complete Sagas of Icelanders*, III, 162.

³¹ *Völsunga saga ok Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, ed. by Magnus Olsen, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 36 (Copenhagen: Møller, 1906–08), p. 90.

Kostbera at lita a runarnar ok innte stafina ok sa, at annat var a ristid, enn undir var, ok villtar voru runarnar. Hon feck þó skilit af vizku sinne. [...] mælti hun til Haugna: '[...] Ok eigi mantu vera glaugryn, ef þer þickir, sem hun hafi i þetta sinn bodit þer systir þin. Ek red runarnar, ok undrumz ek um sva vitra konu, er hun hefir villt ristid. Enn sva er undir, sem bane yþar ligi aa, enn þar var annathvart, at henne vard vant stafs, eda elligar hafa adrir villt.'

(A man called Vingi led King Atli's messengers. The queen, aware of the king's private meeting with his counselors, suspects that there may be treachery toward her brothers. Gudrun cut runes, and took a gold ring and tied a wolf's hair onto it. She gave it to the king's messengers who then departed as the king had ordered. Before they stepped ashore, Vingi saw the runes and changed them in such a way that Gudrun appeared to be urging the brothers to come and meet with Atli. [...] Hogni answered: '[...] And when I looked at the treasures King Atli had sent us, I wondered at the wolf's hair I saw tied around a gold ring. It may be that Gudrun thinks he has the thoughts of a wolf toward us, and that she does not want us to go.' Vingi then showed him the runes that he said Gudrun had sent them. [...] Hogni's wife, Kostbera, the fairest of women, went and looked at the runes. [...] Kostbera began to look at the runes and to read the letters. She saw that something else had been cut over what lay underneath and that the runes had been falsified. Still she discerned through her wisdom what the runes said. [...] she said to Hogni: '[...] You cannot be very skilled at reading runes if you think your sister has asked you to come at this time. I read the runes and wondered how so wise a woman could have carved them so confusedly. Yet it seems that your death is indicated underneath. Either Gudrun missed a letter or someone else has falsified the runes.')

³²

The passage is marked to a high degree by tentativeness (*grunar*, 'suspects', *at vera mune*, 'that there may be'), uncertainty, falsification. This is connected to the fact that it is not possible for Guðrún to deliver her warning herself; instead she must resort to a messenger and a medium. The scene addresses the precarious status of linguistic messages, in particular those which are effected in written form. Guðrún avails herself here of two forms of message and two media: for one the non-linguistic sign of a gold ring encircled with a wolf's hair; for another a linguistic, written message, in the form of a runic inscription. A glance at the 'archaeology of literary communication' (to borrow a phrase from Jan and Aleida Assmann) of the passage shows how this doubling, characteristic of *Völsunga saga*, is to be explained. Both *Atlamál in grænlensko* and *Atlakviða in grænlenska* treat the same material of the treacherous invitation and the abortive warning, though admittedly *Atlakviða* represents the warning only as a non-linguistic (that is, indexical) sign. Here Hogni questions his brother Gunnarr (*Atlakviða* st. 8):

³² *Völsunga saga*, pp. 91–93. English translation (slightly modified) from *The Saga of the Volsungs: The Norse Epic of Sigurd the Dragon Slayer*, trans. by Jesse L. Byock (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 96–98.

- 8 Hvát hygg þú brúði bendo, þá er hon ocr baug sendi,
varinn váðom heiðingia? Hygg ec, at hon vornuð byði;
hár fann ec heiðingia riðit í hring rauðom:
ylfscr er vegr occarr, at ríða ørindi.

(What do you think the lady meant when she sent us a ring,
wrapped in the heath-ranger's coat? I think she offered us a warning;
I found a hair of the heath-ranger twisted round the red ring:
Our way is wolfish if we ride on this journey.)³³

The striking thing about *Atlakviða*'s account, compared to those of *Atlamál* and *Völsunga saga*, is that there are no doubts concerning the interpretation of the sign itself. Högni's question about the meaning of the wolf's hair and their sister's intention is really almost rhetorical, and his own interpretation of the sign follows without hesitation or reserve. In contrast to this terse narrative, *Atlamál in grænlenzco* depicts the same sequence of events in several stanzas and motivates Guðrún's behaviour:

- 3 Horsc var húsfreyia, hugði at manviti,
lag heyrði hon orða, hvat þeir á laun mæltu;
þá var vant vitri, vildi hon þeim hiálpa,
scyldo um sæ sigla, enn siálf né komscat.
- 4 Rúnar nam at rísta, rengði þær Vingi
— fars var hann flýtandi —, áðr hann fram seldi; [. . .]
- (3. The lady of the house was wise employed all her wit,
caught the drift of the words that they spoke in secret.
The clever one was at a loss: she longed to help them
— they must sail over the sea, and she herself could not reach them —
4. She set about cutting runes; Vingi distorted them
— he was a goad to calamity — before he delivered them. [. . .])³⁴

In the present context, the fact that the text expressly refers to Guðrún's awkward situation (she herself cannot go to her brothers, st. 3) is of central importance. She therefore chooses the less unequivocal sign of a written message, which is, however, subject to contingency and to alteration in the process of transmission. The sender — like the writer of a text in a manuscript culture — has only very limited

³³ *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, vol. I: *Text*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 5th edn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1983), p. 241. English translation from *The Poetic Edda*, vol. I: *Heroic Poems*, ed. by Ursula Dronke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 4.

³⁴ *Edda*, p. 248; *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 77.

options for ensuring the immutability of her message. Once it has left her hand, Guðrún no longer has control over her text. And the other side of a communicative transaction which takes place exclusively in writing is also precarious. Even Hǫgni's rune-wise wife Kostbera is at first not sure of herself:

- 9 [...] Kend var Kostbera, kunni hon scil rúna,
inti orðstafi at eldi líósom;
gæta varð hon tungo í góma báða:
váro svá viltar, at var vant at ráða.
- 11 [...] Réð ec þær rúnar, er reist þín systir:
biört hefir þér eigi boðið í sinn þetta.
- 12 Eitt ec mest undromc — mácað ec enn hyggia —,
hvat þá varð vitri, er scyldi vilt rísta;
þvíat svá var ávisat, sem undir væri
bani yccarr beggia, ef iþ brálla qvæmið;
vant er stafís vífi, eða valda aðrir.'
- (9. [...] Kostbera was learned, she knew the meaning of runes,
spelt out the letters by the bright fire.
She had to guard her tongue within clenched teeth.
The runes were so confused she could hardly construe them.
11. [...] I have read those runes that your sister carved:
the fair one has not invited you this time.
12. One thing most makes me wonder — I still cannot fathom it —
what caused the clever one to cut the runes wrongly,
for they seemed to show that it would mean
both your deaths if you hastened there.
The lady has left out a letter, or others have caused it.)³⁵

The message, as falsified by the envoy, appears to Kostbera as literally a palimpsest (*sem undir væri*, 'what may be underneath') which she must labouriously decipher, while in *Atlakviða* a single hair was sufficient to convey an unambiguous warning. The superiority of the preliterate, so to speak 'natural', sign to those of the writing system (or at the very least a certain scepticism of writing) could hardly find a clearer expression.³⁶ Uncertainty persists until the end of st. 12, whose penultimate line Ursula Dronke suggestively translates as 'the lady has left out a letter'.

³⁵ *Edda*, pp. 248–49; *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 77–79.

³⁶ Compare on this point Joseph Harris, 'Performance, Textualization, and Textuality of "Elegy" in Old Norse', in *Textualization of Oral Epics*, ed. by Lauri Honko, Trends in Linguistics: Studies and Monographs, 128 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 89–99.

The series of examples from *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál*, and *Vǫlsunga saga* shows that in these texts communication must fail when the message is detached from its 'relationship to situations of face-to-face communication'.³⁷ Medieval texts are embedded in a culture of performance, marked by tensions between memorial culture and written culture — which is to say, by innumerable interferences, simultaneities, and contradictions — and in this setting the human body is both the bearer of messages and their integrated medium.³⁸ When the body is lacking, as in the case of Guðrún's message, no guarantee is given for reliable transmission. Norwegian and Icelandic authors of the thirteenth century thought about the roles, potentialities, and limits of communication — about mediality — along much more differentiated lines than the bipolar configuration orality/literacy,³⁹ as their texts demonstrate, both in the sometimes explicitly literary- and media-theoretical remarks in the prologues, and implicitly in highly complex narratives such as *Jóns saga helga*, *Njáls saga*, *Atlakviða*, *Atlamál*, or *Vǫlsunga saga*.

³⁷ 'Bindung an Situationen der Kommunikation unter Anwesenden': Kiening, *Zwischen Körper und Schrift*, pp. 12–13.

³⁸ Cf. Wenzel, 'Medien- und Kommunikationstheorie', p. 132.

³⁹ In this connection I cannot follow Gísli Sigurðsson when he calls for an oath of disclosure from every saga researcher regarding the putative cardinal question of saga studies, that of the genre's origins. The dichotomy between orality and literacy that he deploys is simply not adequate to circumstances in medieval Iceland. Alongside his two possibilities (either oral or written origins) a third most certainly exists. (Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. by Nicholas Jones, Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 34–35: 'All research is conducted in the light of a theory of origins, if only in the choice of subjects that the researcher chooses to deal with. [...] Anyone who deals with medieval texts needs to work with some kind of theory of origins [...] the question of origins [...] is ever-present and demands a response from all who are involved in scholarship'; cf. also p. 333.) But narration in the Middle Ages is never an exclusively oral or written affair; rather it is always marked by countless interferences, by hearing and seeing, and often also by feeling. On p. 332 Gísli himself rightly alludes to the influences of orally delivered stories on manuscript transmission: 'the oral tradition persisted alongside and influenced the written tradition'.

THE ICELANDIC SAGA AS A KIND OF LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO ITS REPRESENTATION OF REALITY

Vésteinn Ólason

In our attempts to understand the nature of the sagas of Icelanders (also called family sagas, hereafter *Íslendingasögur*) it is important to study the way in which these narratives ‘represent reality’.¹ The problem of placing the sagas somewhere on an axis between history and fiction is certainly relevant because the sagas purport to be histories (*historiae*) about real persons and events, although it seems obvious to a modern reader that much of their content is fictional. Rather than asking whether the events described in the sagas actually took place, however, I shall try to throw some light on the relationship between the sagas and lived reality in a more general sense. To what extent do they represent the experiences of their community and its ideas about how the past really was, and to what extent the dreams and fantasies of that community? The real and the imagined are, indeed, not clearly distinguishable phenomena, but rather two aspects of experience, and the manner of representation governs the ways in which readers or listeners experience the words of a text. A study of the nature of one kind of narrative demands that attention be paid to other contemporary kinds which form contrasts with the object of study or overlap with it.

¹ This phrase is a reference to Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: Dargestellte Wirklichkeit in der abendländischen Literatur* (Bern: Francke, 1946), or more precisely to the subtitle of Willard R. Trask’s English translation, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Another work characterized by great erudition and good sense, which has inspired me, is Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature* (New York: Methuen, 1984).

When we study how a particular narrative describes reality, or creates an illusion of a recognizable world, we assume that what inspires and informs authors is of two kinds: their experience of life, and their experience of other texts (written or oral). From other texts they derive not only factual information but ideas, rules, or conventions about how to tell a story, how the elements of the narrative should be arranged to create a desired effect and what kind of material it is appropriate to include in a story (or what, using an Icelandic word, is *söguligt*, 'worth telling a story about'). Narrative conventions must certainly be taken into account when we consider our texts, medieval sagas, and yet the world they describe must also stand in some relation to lived extra-textual experience, the experience of the saga-man and his audience, the writer and his readers. This includes not only direct personal experiences but the accumulated experiences and views of former generations of the community, or what is sometimes called 'cultural memory'.

The nature of a literary text is reflected in its form no less than in its content; thus, certain elements of a narrative that is presented as history indicate mode or genre and therefore have a formal function at the same time as they seem to constitute references to 'reality'. The nature of narrative texts is an essential part of any discussion about history and fiction, and it is now generally accepted that all historical narrative includes an element of fiction or invention, which is inherent in the textualization of the material.² Discussions about genre and sub-genre are necessary if we want to understand the nature of the sagas, and yet such discussions have sometimes created more confusion than clarity, which is why this essay begins with a rather elementary discussion of this issue. Following that is an attempt to define the characteristics of texts which in my opinion belong to the high points of saga writing seen from the vantage point of well-informed modern literary criticism.³ In this discussion relations between genres and sub-

² These problems are frequently touched upon, directly or indirectly, in the writings of Margaret Clunies Ross, for instance in 'Realism and the Fantastic in the Old Icelandic Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 74 (2002), 443–54, as well as in *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols, Viking Collection, 7, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994–98), II: *The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, pp. 49 and 77–82.

³ It is at any time the task of the literary critic to elucidate the reasons why certain texts appeal more strongly or in a different way to his or her contemporaries than others. By 'well-informed' I mean that the critic must be familiar with the scholarship concerning these works and their background and be able to understand the historical context out of which they have arisen, that is, to be able to conduct a dialogue with the works and their time. This means that knowledge of the evaluation and classification of works at the time they came into being is important, but it does not bar the critic from judging the works by the standards of his own time, and this is indeed

genres, or in other words between different forms of narrative discourse, are inextricably interwoven with the question of how reality is represented in the *Íslendingasögur*: how experience, fantasy, and convention are united in the creative process.

It would be a serious methodological mistake to look at the Icelandic narratives from the Middle Ages that have been termed sagas as if they were static phenomena that could be clearly distinguished from other narratives and categorized unequivocally. They are a fairly large network of texts linked not only to each other and oral tradition but to texts in other languages, primarily Latin, as well. It is important to look at this issue in the light of a general approach to the problem of mode and genre. The most useful work of reference with which I am familiar in this field is *Kinds of Literature* by Alastair Fowler. I share with Fowler the attitude that genres are not neat pigeonholes into which you can put literary works, but that they are nevertheless concepts of great importance for the writing of literary history and for interpretation. A new genre, or a new norm against which individual works are measured, comes into being when gradual innovation and the assembly of elements from different kinds of texts has reached a stage at which people begin to realize that a new kind of literature has appeared. As Fowler explains, the new norm not only influences what follows but also informs the way existing works are classified:

Whether or not it is meant to be innovative, the assembled form is comprehended as a new genre only from a subsequent perspective. This retrospective critical insight regroups individual works and sees them now as belonging to the new genre, now anticipating it, now differing in kind.⁴

The Icelanders started writing histories in their own language in imitation of European narrative genres, but the combination of the new forms with traditional material, and influences from the oral form of that material, gradually changed their histories, until they were writing narratives that are so different from the original models that they have been looked upon as a new kind of literature, the saga. Although little of what was written in the twelfth century is preserved in its

inevitable if we want to understand why texts from the distant past can still move us deeply, while others may entertain us but strike us as shallow, and still others only bore us. Needless to say, all three categories may be of interest to scholarship, and needless to say there are no clear divisions between these three categories.

⁴ Alastair Fowler, *Kinds of Literature: An Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 159.

original form, several works are preserved in later reworkings. That literature in Latin was the model for these writers is apparent both in the form of the narratives they wrote in the vernacular and to some extent in the style.⁵ The first texts about St Óláfr Haraldsson and the life of the missionary king Óláfr Tryggvason were written in Latin (in Norway and Iceland), and so were the very first lives and miracles of saintly Icelandic bishops. The first Icelandic writers did not create new kinds of literature: they wrote catalogues or lists and genealogies (*konungatal* and *attartala* and even *landnámsmannatal*),⁶ the *vitae* and *miracula* of saints; they wrote *res gestae*, chronicles, national history, and royal biographies, as well as *gesta episcoporum* about the Bishops of Skálholt and Hólar.⁷ The Book of the Icelanders

⁵ This issue is discussed, for example, by Carol Clover with many examples in a chapter called 'Towards the Classical Saga', in *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 148–84.

⁶ Sveinbjörn Rafnsson has argued that the first versions of *Landnámabók* were of this kind and that the work was given a more narrative form at a later stage: 'Landnámabók var upphaflega hvorki hugsuð né gerð sem sagnarit að því er best verður séð. Hún er eins konar skrá yfir allt jarðnæði á Íslandi, skipulega sett fram réttisælis umhverfis Ísland' ('The Book of Settlements was originally neither planned nor composed as a historical work, as far as can be seen. It is a kind of register of all inhabited landholdings in Iceland, recorded in an orderly fashion clockwise around Iceland'). *Sögugerð Landnámabókar: Um íslenska sagnaritun á 12. og 13. öld* (Reykjavik: Sagnfræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 2001), p. 14. I find this plausible; although it cannot be maintained with certainty that the earliest version had so little narrative content that it could be characterized as a list or catalogue, it is likely that much of the narrative content of the extant versions is the result of later additions.

⁷ Sverrir Tómasson has demonstrated how Icelandic historical literature can be categorized according to common notions of genre in medieval literature: 'Veraldleg sagnaritun', in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. I, ed. by Guðrún Nordal, Sverrir Tómasson, and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavik: Mál og menning, 1992), pp. 263–308, 345–418 (pp. 281–91). However, much of this historical literature, for example, the sagas about Norwegian kings, gradually acquired characteristics that distinguished it from contemporary European literature, an observation that is confirmed by Sverre Bagge, an expert in medieval European historiography: 'They [the kings' sagas] represent a considerable degree of originality. They are clearly very different from the "mainstream" Latin historiography of the eleventh century onwards in their secular attitude, their emphasis on ordinary, day-to-day politics, and their consistent attempts to explain success and failure.' 'Icelandic Uniqueness or a Common European Culture? The Case of the Kings' Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69 (1997), 418–42 (p. 434). Bagge's description and analysis is, however, almost exclusively based on his study of *Heimskringla*, and thus is rather a description of the end result of a development than of its first stages. In vol. I of *Biskupa sögur*, ed. by Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, Íslenzk fornrit, 15 (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), pp. xiv–xxx, Ásdís Egilsdóttir describes the main formal characteristics of the Icelandic *biskupasögur* ('bishops' sagas') in the light of medieval literature in Latin about the same subject.

is *historia*, an *origo gentis*. Despite some peculiarities, twelfth-century Icelandic prose may thus be classified in accordance with medieval generic concepts.⁸ All narrative written in prose was presented as truth, although it contains many things that now must be considered fiction or speculation. Regardless of factuality or fictionality these narratives were thus conceived and written in a historical mode.

Inevitably, early Icelandic writers changed their models or imitated them in their own characteristic ways: firstly, they wrote in the vernacular; secondly, they wrote in a simple style — a low, very moderately rhetorical style, for which there were models in Latin narrative — because they wanted to be understood by an illiterate public; last but not least, they incorporated material from oral tradition: information, tales, and even verses about their protagonists. This new content was used to fill and expand the form, and of course it changed it.⁹ Around 1200 and in the first decades of the thirteenth century a veritable mania for writing about the past and about what had been happening among the neighbours of the Icelanders led to the creation of numerous new biographies and histories with secular content. Although it is mostly self-evident how these works can be related to the European models, they have so many characteristics and peculiarities of their own that we can now, with retrospective critical hindsight, say that the Icelandic saga, a special kind of writing in a historical mode, was emerging.¹⁰ However, so much remains of the links with the European models that at the time of their writing the sagas of kings, earls, and bishops that were written around 1200 would in all likelihood have been seen by learned people interested in such issues as belonging to well-known genres of the medieval European tradition rather than as a new kind.

⁸ Because we only have second-hand knowledge of the real texts written in the twelfth century, such statements are based on circumstantial evidence. Although Margaret Clunies Ross is right that 'during the twelfth century Icelanders were [...] composing historical writings that presumably had no exact parallel in either the oral tradition or in foreign, Latin sources' (*Prolonged Echoes*, II, 47), I think one must emphasize 'exact', because it is highly unlikely that the peculiarities had developed to such an extent that it is justified to talk about a new genre or new genres until after 1200.

⁹ The concluding words of Umberto Eco's well-known essay, 'On the Possibility of Generating Aesthetic Messages in an Edenic Language' come to mind: 'in order to restructure codes, one needs to rewrite messages'. *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (London: Hutchinson, 1981), p. 104.

¹⁰ In addition to the study referred to in note 7 above, Sverre Bagge has described the characteristics of the kings' sagas and their place within a literary context with special reference to *Heimskringla* in *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), esp. pp. 232–47.

Some of these sagas tell strange stories: for instance the Vinland Sagas, *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlandinga saga*. They are now usually classified as *Íslendingasögur* because all of the main characters go from Iceland to Greenland and Vinland, and some of them return to Iceland and have offspring there. However, these narratives differ from the *Íslendingasögur* in that feud plays no important role in the main action (it features only at the beginning of *Eiríks saga*). Since one of them or both may be older than or as old as the first *Íslendingasögur*, we can see that at the time they were written it would have been natural to group them with other kinds of literature.¹¹ As travelogues and descriptions of exotic and marvelous places and events they have parallels in Latin literature, such as the *Navigatio Brendani*, an explicitly religious tale.¹² Although basically secular, both sagas introduce religious motifs. In *Eiríks saga* the prophecy about Guðríðr and her descendants as well as the tale of the conversion of Þjóðhildr and Eiríkr's resistance to the new faith are of this kind. At the end of *Grænlandinga saga* we find information about Guðríðr Þorbjarnardóttir that bears all the marks of hagiography. The basic interest of these sagas is, however, secular and geographical, one might even say encyclopaedic: they inform us about the outskirts of the known world.

The writers of sagas about kings and bishops had found material in oral tradition and remodeled it for inclusion in their literary creations. In the sagas of kings there are many anecdotes in which Icelanders play a part, some of them from oral tradition, others probably fictitious. In the historical work of Ari and in the bishops' sagas events taking place in Iceland were described, so that it was only a short step to the writing of separate works about Icelanders who were neither saints nor church leaders and who led lives very different from those of the European aristocracy of their time. Such works began to be written in the first half of the thirteenth

¹¹ Ólafur Halldórsson has argued in *Grænland í miðaldaritum* (Reykjavik: Sögufélag, 1978), pp. 293–400, and in his 'Formáli', in *Eiríks saga rauða: Texti Skálholtsbókar AM 557 4to*, Íslenskt forrit, 4. *Viðauki*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1985), pp. 367–99, that the two sagas are independent of each other and were composed no later than about 1200. I have reservations about the dating, especially of *Eiríks saga*: see Vésteinn Ólason, 'Sagatextene – forskningsstatus', in *Leiv Eriksson, Helge Ingstad og Vinland: Innlegg ved eit seminar i regi av Det Kongelige norske Videnskabers Selskab 13–14 oktober 2000*, ed. by Jan Ragnar Hagland and Steinar Supphellen (Trondheim: Tapir, 2001), pp. 41–64.

¹² See Theodore M. Andersson, 'Exoticism in Early Iceland', in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, and Yvonne S. Bonnetain (Trieste: Parnaso, 2000), pp. 19–28, and Sverrir Tómasson, 'Ferðir þessa heims og annars: Paradís – Ódáinsakur – Vinland í íslenskum ferðalýsingum miðalda', *Gripla*, 12 (2001), 23–40.

century, but we cannot decide exactly how soon this happened. Why were these works written? Where would one expect to find interest in such literature and the means to create it? No doubt among such aristocracy or gentry as there was in Iceland, a few increasingly wealthy and powerful families controlled most of the country. Many of the chieftain families had good relations with the Church most of the time, and the bishops and other influential clerics were either members or protégés of these families. The origin of Icelandic literature with secular themes must therefore be sought in the close cooperation between members of the chieftain class with secular and historical interests and the clergy.¹³

Whatever the reason, it is a fact that in the thirteenth century Icelanders began to write sagas of considerable length about events in their own past that they found interesting. Some of the sagas about the near past, the contemporary sagas, are probably as old as the oldest sagas of Icelanders, or even older. They are extremely rich in information and interesting as sources, besides often being well written and effective as narrative. They are, however, usually overloaded with facts; the multitude of persons mentioned and the many insignificant events described make them confusing and often difficult reading. Were it only for these contemporary sagas, we could still see medieval Icelandic narrative as a somewhat peculiar form of biography or chronicle, and certainly not more confusing and formless than much other medieval historical narrative. However, in this literature of the thirteenth century there are examples of highly developed narrative skills in certain sections, characterized by the same narrative art as we find in the *Íslendingasögur* proper and in thirteenth-century *konungasögur*. It is nevertheless with the *Íslendingasögur* that something so different from European literature takes shape that it not only calls for the naming of a new category, but also — at least for modern readers — has changed the way earlier narrative texts are classified, and this affects how we look at the kings' sagas composed in the thirteenth century, such as *Heimskringla* and *Morkinskinna*, as well as later compilations. In modern, especially non-Icelandic usage, 'Icelandic saga' is a convenient term for this new genre. It would probably not have made much sense for medieval Icelanders to single out the *Íslendingasögur* as a separate genre, although they were of course well aware that sagas could be divided into groups according to content. Such groupings are, indeed, the basis of the names of the sub-genres of the saga most commonly used in modern times. Modern saga criticism has, hesitatingly, sought criteria other than that of subject matter to define sub-genres, especially

¹³ A thorough argumentation for this view is found in Gunnar Karlsson, *Godamenning: Staða og áhrif godorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), pp. 429–58.

for the *Íslendingasögur*,¹⁴ the most important of which is the central position of feud in the plot, the crucial importance of an ethics of honour as a driving force behind these feuds, and the social mechanisms activated to control and eventually resolve the conflicts. To this could be added a highly objective narrative technique and ways of characterization that discreetly reveal characters that are neither perfect nor totally evil.

The *Íslendingasögur* are written as histories, that is, they refer to historical personages, some events they describe are known to be historical, and their action takes place within real geography (mainly in Iceland) and is conditioned by Icelandic social and political structures. They present themselves as history, and their narrative voice is that of the historian who steadily recounts the sequence of events without raising his voice or making intrusive comments. Much of the narrative, however, is of such a kind that its truthfulness cannot be verified and may even seem of little consequence to a modern reader.¹⁵ The historical mode unites these thirteenth-century works and the literature of the twelfth century. Among their formative influences, apart from the literary genres already mentioned, must have been heroic lays and oral legends of different kinds. The narrative style and technique of the sagas shows every sign of being an imitation, conscious or unconscious, of oral narrative.¹⁶ It is striking that several sagas, usually

¹⁴ I mention only four works where this issue is discussed on a broad basis: Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 28 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic Saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortelling og ære: Studier i islændingesagaerne* (Århus: Aarhus universitetsforlag, 1993), and Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age: Narration and Representation in the Sagas of the Icelanders*, trans. by Andrew Wawn (Reykjavik: Heimskringla, 1998). In all these works feud is considered as a basic element in the plot.

¹⁵ Preben Meulengracht Sørensen states this succinctly: 'strengt taget er der ingen genuine historiske kendsgerninger i islændingesagaene. Hvor de findes, er de underordnet en form der tjener et andet formål, og denne form er efter nutidens begreber litterær' ('Strictly speaking there are no authentic historical facts in the Sagas of Icelanders. When they occur, they are subordinated to a form that serves another purpose, and this form is in modern terms literary'). *Fortelling og ære*, p. 19.

¹⁶ This is a fundamental proposition in Preben Meulengracht Sørensen's study of the sagas, *Fortelling og ære*, see esp. the analysis on pp. 52–78, which concludes with the words: 'Den forstærkede interesse for fortiden og den øgede tro på traditionen, som vi kan iagttage fra omkring 1200 og fremefter, modsvares af en stilistisk udvikling, hvor mundtlig traditionel fortællestil efterlignes i en skriftlig form, som i løbet af århundredet raffineres til den "klassiske" sagastil' ('The strengthened interest in the past and the increased belief in tradition, which we can observe from

considered among the oldest ones, such as *Egils saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Hallfredar saga*, and others whose dating is controversial, like *Bjarnar saga Híttdælakappa* and *Fóstbræðra saga*, have much to say about skalds and their dealings with foreign kings. Most of the dramatic action of *Egils saga* actually takes place outside Iceland. Thus these early sagas can be seen as an outgrowth from the sagas about kings with their short tales (*þættir*) about Icelanders, while other sagas that usually are considered to be relatively old, such as *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, and *Reykðæla saga*, seem to a far greater extent to use or imitate popular legends about past events.¹⁷ This is mentioned here because it is clear that throughout the period during which *Íslendingasögur* were written, their interplay with the various genres, sub-genres, or types of discourse surrounding them was an important aspect of their development. Which other kinds are most important differs from saga to saga, and from the sagas written in the thirteenth century to the ones written in the fourteenth. This interplay of kinds of narrative discourse is an important factor in the impression that each saga makes of being more or less realistic, as well as in the sagas' total impression as works of narrative art.

The realism of the *Íslendingasögur* has been an issue of debate for a long time; many scholars have claimed that they are characterized by realism and have even compared them with the modern realistic novel.¹⁸ Medievalists have tended to be

c. 1200 onwards, is paralleled by a stylistic development where oral traditional narrative style is imitated in a written form, which in the course of the [thirteenth] century is refined towards "classical" saga style').

¹⁷ After this article was written, Theodore M. Andersson published a thorough study of the chronology of saga writing that in general harmonizes with my own conclusions although he attempts more precise datings than I have done. See T. M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁸ W. P. Ker hints at this when he says at the beginning of his influential treatment of the sagas, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (New York: Dover, 1957; repr. of 2nd edn, 1908), p. 183, 'The conventional form of the saga [...] is in essentials the form with which modern readers are acquainted in modern story-telling.' Sigurður Nordal's statement about *Hrafnkels saga* as a short novel goes in the same direction; see Sigurður Nordal, *Hrafnkatla*, *Studia Islandica*, 7 (Reykjavik: Ísafold, 1940), p. 66: 'Hrafnkatla er, þegar á allt er litið, ein hin fullkomnasta stutta bóksaga (short novel), sem til er í heimsbókmenntunum' ('Hrafnkatla is, everything considered, one of the most perfect short novels found in world literature'); see also Forrest S. Scott, 'The Icelandic Family Saga as Precursor of the Novel, with Special Reference to *Eyrbyggja Saga*', *Parergon*, 6 (1973), 3–13. A balanced discussion of the case with special reference to the historical novel is Joseph Harris, 'Saga as Historical Novel', in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. by John Lindow,

sceptical of this claim and have emphasized the basic difference between modern and medieval narrative.¹⁹

The *Íslendingasögur* seem above all to be interested in events that concern conflicts in which honour and life are at stake. In this, the saga is a true descendant of the heroic lay, while the broader scope of the saga allows a much more detailed narrative. When the details included are familiar or plausible, the narrative acquires a more realistic flavour. Descriptions of daily life or familiar surroundings, such as we find in abundance in the realistic novel, are, however, not one of the saga's concerns. As a rule the saga is only interested in mundane details that are relevant to the — normally dramatic — action. Nevertheless, we occasionally find scenes from daily life in the sagas that are more detailed than the development of the plot demands, and the study of such scenes can be rewarding. They strengthen the mimetic element in the texts. In most *Íslendingasögur* (as well as in other types of saga) there is, however, another element present, an element of fantasy which manifests itself in tales of ghosts or other supernatural beings, of magic and sorcery, as well as in omens, prophetic dreams, direct prophecies, and similar phenomena.²⁰

During the second half of the twentieth century a strong voice in literary criticism challenged the meaningfulness of relating literature to reality, and the emphasis was moved to intertextuality, the idea that a text primarily refers to and responds to other texts but not directly to any extra-textual reality. According to this view, a reader only recognizes or reactivates reminiscences of other texts when experiencing something as familiar or striking in a text. Realism is not about reality but about 'l'effet de réel', in the words of Roland Barthes.²¹ Today, most scholars hesitate to adopt the most extreme variant of this view, although there are few academic critics who deny that conventions and intertextual references play a decisive role in the generation of meaning and effect in literature. It is not possible for an author to free himself or herself entirely from the confines of intertextuality and convention, and therefore the romantic idea of the free spirit of a

Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), pp. 187–219.

¹⁹ See, for example, the discussion of this issue in Lars Lönnroth, 'Isberg på drift', in *Skaldemjödet i berget: Essayer om isländsk ordkonst och dess återanvändning i nutiden* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1996), pp. 35–59.

²⁰ See Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, pp. 79–81; on the fantastic element in *Egils saga*, see p. 196.

²¹ Roland Barthes, 'L'effet de réel', *Communications*, 11 (1968), 84–89.

poet who has total control over the medium has been abandoned. An interaction between textual and extra-textual experiences, between a linguistically constructed social aspect and a socially determined use of language, underlies the generation of meaning in all important literature. In the discussion of literature the term 'realism' refers to a literary convention no less than to fidelity to lived experience and real surroundings, and there is considerable risk that a concept so much used in the discussion of modern literature may mislead us in a study of medieval literature, especially if our objective is to approach a historical understanding of the texts. Nevertheless, it seems obvious that some medieval texts are more realistic or less fantastic than others, and we need to investigate the significance of such differences to the age that created these works, as well as the difference it makes to our own experience and understanding of the texts. Most of the *Íslendingasögur* differ considerably from continental romances, even the ones written as prose, and when we look at the Icelandic sagas as a whole, they can be placed at different points on an axis between a 'realistic' or 'mimetic' and a 'romantic' or 'fantastic' mode.

Njáls saga can be taken as an example here, because many of its readers seem to share the feeling that this great saga represents or responds to some significant and moving, if distant, reality — or, in other words, that this saga has a strong reality effect, while at the same time a fantastic thread is firmly woven into its fabric. Other sagas, such as most of the *fornaldarsögur* (the legendary or mythic-heroic sagas), and also some of the *Íslendingasögur*, like *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* and even *Grettis saga*, produce the immediate effect of belonging to a less mimetic or more fantastic mode of narrative, because they tell us about trolls, magicians, shape-changers, and events brought about by magic.²² What is it in the texts that

²² Ármann Jakobsson has discussed the literary mode of *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* in 'History of the Trolls? *Bárðar saga* as an Historical Narrative', *Saga-Book*, 25 (1998), 53–71. He argues that the age that produced *Bárðar saga* saw it as a historical narrative, because the phenomena described in the saga, which now are considered supernatural, were at the time seen as natural or real. This is probably correct, at least as far as a great proportion of the audience was concerned, although there is ample evidence that the truthfulness of such stories was debated and doubted by some people. In any case Ármann is certainly right that the saga is written in the historical mode characteristic of *Íslendingasögur*. It seems to me, however, that even at that time people would generally have felt that there was a difference between sagas which we now see as realistic, because they dramatize plausible social conflicts between life-like characters, and more fantastic or mythical tales like *Bárðar saga*. Undoubtedly, many people in the past found *Bárðar saga* more entertaining and even more interesting than the sagas that have enjoyed most popularity among literary scholars in modern times. The difference is not necessarily one of lasting aesthetic qualities but of kind.

can explain these different reactions? Is it perhaps a modern fallacy that there is a significant difference? If there is a difference, it is certainly not a question of historicity, although most people would have thought so a century ago.

I have in a previous publication made a distinction between what, for lack of better terms, I called classical and post-classical sagas.²³ The relevant criteria mentioned were the greater prominence of the element of the fantastic in the post-classical sagas and the impression that these sagas describe older Icelandic society less distinctly and with less care than the classical sagas.²⁴ This classification has been called into question, for instance by Margaret Clunies Ross in the second volume of her *Prolonged Echoes* (1998), as well as in an article in *Scandinavian Studies* in 2002.²⁵ I have added a few points to my argument in my book *Dialogues with the Viking Age*.²⁶ The question is: are these features valid criteria for a descriptive categorization, or are they basically evaluative, the result of a modern aesthetics? I believe their use can easily be defended from the practical point of view of the literary historian who needs to divide his story into chapters and sub-chapters and give the readers hints about what is coming. Moreover, I believe that this categorization is based on real differences. My justification for dividing the sagas in three groupings, which I think may be called pre-classical, classical, and post-classical, ought to emerge from this essay. As stated above, I believe that the *Íslendingasögur* gradually acquired their most important characteristics. In an initial stage they had an uncertain identity, emerging in the shadow of other kinds of narrative, sagas of kings on the one hand and legends or tales about native historical and legendary figures and events on the other. When the sagas had developed a more independent literary style and, in my opinion, a more self-conscious approach to the material, we find sagas such as the ones I have called classical, *Gísla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Njáls saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and others, still frequently showing

²³ That a group of sagas, mostly dated in the second half of the thirteenth century or around 1300, can be singled out as being 'classical' is, of course, not my idea. Others have used this term, also in combination with 'pre-classical' and, more frequently, 'post-classical'. The last category has even been dealt with in a separate monograph, Martin Arnold, *The Post-Classical Icelandic Family Saga*, *Scandinavian Studies*, 9 (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen, 2003), where many of the features that distinguish these sagas from the classical ones are clearly described; see esp. pp. 217–32.

²⁴ 'Íslendingasögur og þættir', in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. II, ed. by Böðvarr Guðmundsson, Sverrir Tómasson, Torfi H. Tulinius, and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavik: Mál og menning, 1993), pp. 23–163 (pp. 80–82); the post-classical sagas are treated on pp. 143–60.

²⁵ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, II, 50, and 'Realism and the Fantastic'.

²⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, pp. 21, and 217–18.

affinities with other genres, not least the romance and in certain passages saints' lives, but characterized by a strong consciousness of the special conditions Icelandic society and its ethical order set for the action and by a strong feeling that the characters are bound by their natural and social limits and therefore always imperfect in some ways. These sagas may include elements of the supernatural, the fantastic, and the religious dimensions of existence, and their heroes may be outstanding, but everything is subject to an image of man as an imperfect being, bound by a particular society and its essentially problematic dilemma of the demands of honour vs. the laws and needs of the community. This describes the *Íslendingasaga* at its most typical and distinct from other contemporary genres, therefore the term 'classical'. The post-classical sagas, *Grettis saga*, *Finnboga saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, and others, have closer ties to the genre of romance, especially the *fornaldarsaga*; social and natural limits are no longer absolute, the fate of a hero can be decided in interaction with a ghost or a giant, and the strength of the heroes makes them superior to all adversaries.

Calling one of these groups classical does not amount to stating that all the classical sagas are 'better' literature than the pre- or post-classical ones. *Egils saga* and *Grettis saga* are of course among the best and most interesting sagas by any account. But it is an attempt to point out what is essential in a group of sagas that, in my opinion, are the truest representatives of the literary achievement of the saga writers. It is, however, easy to admit that no absolute division can be made between classical/realistic and post-classical/fantastic sagas.²⁷

Although it is of course important to seek an understanding of how medieval writers and audiences appreciated and classified their literature, it must also be perfectly legitimate and even unavoidable to make distinctions and evaluations

²⁷ Margaret Clunies Ross has also discussed this problem in 'The Intellectual Complexion of the Icelandic Middle Ages: Towards a New Profile of Old Icelandic Saga Literature', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69 (1997), 443–53. I can subscribe to her statement on p. 449 of the article: 'The saga form is in fact characterized by what I will call multiple modalities, that is, modes of writing that present different dimensions of represented experience. There are very few examples of individual sagas that are uni-modal. In some sagas and some sub-genres of the saga a specific mode dominates, as the realistic/historical does in most *samtíðar sögur* and some *Íslendinga sögur* or as the fantastic/supernatural does in many *fornaldar sögur* or *riddara sögur*.' Although I am not sure that anyone has tried to establish watertight compartments for different groups of sagas, she is quite right that the distinctions between 'genres' in Old Icelandic literature have frequently been too heavily emphasized, just as has been the case with generic categories in general. The issue was discussed thoroughly in *Scandinavian Studies* 1975 by Theodore Andersson, Joseph Harris, and Lars Lönnroth.

of medieval literature on the basis of modern aesthetics or ideas as long as it is made clear what is what. Maintaining that one saga is different from another in certain respects does not amount to claiming that a contemporary audience was fully aware of the difference. When a modern reader finds that some sagas embody the fundamental qualities of the genre more fully than others, this impression is obviously based on criteria considered to be valid today but does not necessarily amount to a claim that these criteria are of universal value or that the writers or their audiences were conscious of them. From this point of view it makes perfect sense to say that *Egils saga* or *Njáls saga* are 'better' or more interesting and original than *Göngu-Hrólfs saga* or even *Orvar-Odds saga*, although the *fornaldarsögur* are good literature and worthy of study; certainly, they were for long periods more popular than the *Íslendingasögur*. A rough grouping into 'pre-classical', 'classical', and 'post-classical' *Íslendingasögur* is an attempt to understand a development, to define the norms against which works from different times can be judged, in relation to changes in society as well as literary conventions.²⁸

Njáls saga, to take as an example a saga that modern readers would consider an obvious representative of the sagas at their best, a 'classical' saga in my terminology, is full of events which today would be called fantastic or at least unrealistic: premonitions, omens, and prophecies play an important role, and the supernatural has a position which is quite different from what it has in the modern realistic novel (although features of a similar kind are present in much modern fiction and film).²⁹ In this respect the difference between *Njáls saga* and the post-classical *Íslendingasögur*, or even the *fornaldarsögur*, may be one of degree only, but still an important one. The same applies to what the characters are able to do,

²⁸ An aversion to all evaluative categorization is in my opinion one of the unfortunate tendencies accompanying postmodernism as well as the excessive emphasis on one manuscript by the New Philologists. In both cases, it was a positive move to increase scholars' awareness of the relative nature of some ideas about literary and textual quality, but the negative aspect of these schools of thought is a tendency to undermine the most important function of criticism, which is to make distinctions and to evaluate; to say, this saga is different from that one in certain respects and in my opinion better for it, and this manuscript is more important and has a better text than another one, although each of them has its own intrinsic value.

²⁹ Such phenomena in *Njáls saga* are listed and discussed from a narratological point of view by Rory McTurk, 'The Supernatural in *Njáls saga*: A Narratological Approach', *Saga-Book*, 23 (1990), 28–45; in addition to those articles already cited, the function of the fantastic element is discussed, for example, in Lars Lönnroth, 'Saga and Jartegn: The Appeal of Mystery in Saga Texts', in *Die Aktualität der Saga: Festschrift für Hans Schottmann*, ed. by Stig Toftgaard Andersen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 111–23.

physically: Gunnarr's and Kolskeggr's defense at Knafahólar or Skarphéðinn's killing of Þráinn show such exaggerated strength and agility that if we stop to reflect we find it incredible, unrealistic; it is not likely that any of the saga's readers had actually seen anything like it.³⁰ The feats of characters in the legendary *Qrvar-Odds saga* or in the fourteenth-century *Íslendingasögur*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss* or *Grettis saga*, may be even more exaggerated and impossible for an adult reader to take seriously; combat with supernatural beings certainly strikes modern readers as more fantastic than fighting with other humans. It seems likely that this was also the case in the Middle Ages. The narrators of all these sagas look back upon an age which they assume was more glorious than their own age, a time when the supernatural more frequently interfered in people's lives. Their world is not a secularized one like our modern world, where the sacred or mythical has a clearly demarcated place and is opposed to the secular and the physical which dominates daily life. The supernatural was strange or marvellous in the world of *Njáls saga* (see, e.g., the reactions of people to Gunnarr's appearance in his mound after death in ch. 78 of the Íslensk fornrit edition),³¹ but it was possible and therefore not necessarily fictitious. Differences of degree can be significant, however. Divine or daemonic powers do not directly influence the course of events in *Njáls saga*. Gunnarr's arrows do not return to him after being shot, nor do his enemies change their shape or disappear into the earth as happens in *Qrvar-Odds saga*. Njáll's religion gives him hope, but the fire that kills him is lit by humans for human reasons, and there is no chance of its being extinguished by a miraculous or magic intervention. Everything seems to be determined by fate before it happens, and yet

³⁰ It has been maintained by people knowledgeable about martial arts that it is not impossible that a well-trained warrior could repeat Gunnarr's actions, and indeed, circus artists and contemporary samurais perform the most unlikely feats. It is, however, quite incredible that the farmer Gunnarr would have been able to conquer and put to flight as many of his peers as he is said to have done with Kolskeggr's help at Knafahólar. Narratives about near-contemporary events, like the sagas of the *Sturlunga* compilation, or even the less stylized older sagas of Icelanders, never show anything that comes close to what a Gunnarr or an Egill Skallagrímsson is able to do. Trying to calculate whether descriptions of fighting in the sagas are in some sense 'true' is of course beside the point, however. What these descriptions show is the author's imaginative strength and dexterity with words as well as his knowledge of the literary conventions governing descriptions of fights.

³¹ I have discussed this scene and several related ones in 'The Un/Grateful Dead – From Baldr to Bægifótr', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), pp. 153–71.

every significant event has its causes in human feelings and actions. This is well exemplified in the tale about the Battle of Clontarf in *Njáls saga*. The political and psychological reasons for the battle are fully explained in human terms, while the vision of women (norns) weaving the fates of men and singing *Darraðarljóð* before the battle opens up another sphere, outside the action. This vision comes, however, closer than any other scene in *Njáls saga* to indicating that supernatural powers somehow control or influence the course of events, and some scenes in the Clontarf episode are characterized by a sense of the uncanny that is often evoked by fantastic literature.³² This is, however, far from being a dominant trait in the saga. *Njáls saga* is securely grounded in the human world, in Icelandic geography and the social fabric of the Icelandic commonwealth as the author understood it. In this respect *Njáls saga* is very different from, say, *Qrvar-Odds saga*; Qrvar-Oddr travels widely in all the known world, deals with giants and shape-changers, uses magic arrows, and lives for three hundred years. Socially he moves from being a farmer's son to becoming king.³³ Although *Grettis saga* is much closer to *Njáls saga* than to *Qrvar-Odds saga*, Grettir frequently moves into a wild sphere where he has encounters with giants and monsters. His greatest test, and a turning point in his life, is a wrestling match with a ghost, and his enemies would not have succeeded in felling him without recourse to magic. Magic and sorcerers occur in such classical sagas as *Gísla saga* and *Laxdæla saga*, but do not affect the development of the plot in any important way, although magic may escalate a fateful course of events. *Eyrbyggja saga* has a stronger element of the fantastic than most sagas, and yet it is an example of a saga that I would certainly classify as classical, and is clearly distinguishable from the sagas of the fourteenth century. The reason is the strong awareness it displays of social and political conditions in the old society.³⁴ The revenants of *Eyrbyggja saga* affect the lives of human beings, but

³² The concept 'fantastic' in 'fantastic literature' or 'fantastic element' is of course problematic and variously defined by scholars. An informative and balanced discussion is found in Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis*, pp. 5–28.

³³ It is interesting that two of the most romantic heroes of the *Íslendingasögur*, Gunnarr in *Njáls saga* and Kjartan in *Laxdæla saga*, become romantically attached to ladies of high birth when they visit Norway in their youth, and it is hinted that they could have married into foreign princely families. However, both return to Iceland and to reality, because such an alliance would be against the conventions of the genre; such a thing had never happened.

³⁴ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Nokkrar athugasemdir um Eyrbyggja sögu', *Skírnir*, 145 (1971), 5–25; see also Vésteinn Ólason, 'Introduction', in *Gisli Sursson's Saga and the Saga of the People of Eyri* (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. vii–xlix, esp. pp. xxxiii–xlii.

their world is mostly clearly distinguished from the world of the living, and the supremacy of human society in this world is confirmed when the revenants obey the verdict of a human court and disappear (*Eyrbyggja saga*, ch. 55). The fantastic elements in the saga are a mixture of popular motifs of pre-Christian or at least non-Christian origins and influences from religious literature, as is quite obvious in the Fróðá-episode.³⁵

It is well known that *Njáls saga* has been influenced by religious literature.³⁶ This is nowhere as obvious as in the description of Njáll's dead body after the burning of Bergþórshváll in ch. 132, where it is stated that 'Njal's countenance and body are radiant and I've never seen such radiance in a dead man's body'.³⁷ This state of the body is to be understood as miraculous, of course, and it signalled to the medieval reader that Njáll was granted salvation and that the manner in which he met his death was that of a true Christian. Although such Christian symbolism is not typical saga style, this occurrence has at this point in the saga been prepared and integrated to such a degree that it is not likely to come as a shock to the reader, any more than the omens and portents which frequently forebode fateful events. In spite of this religious theme, *Njáls saga* is dominated by other considerations, and despite the radiance of Njáll's body the burning is felt by readers to be a tragedy.

The examples given here serve to show that the narrative art of *Njáls saga* does not rely on detailed imitation of reality, and that supernatural elements play an important role; the narrative conventions of the saga are different from those of the modern realistic novel. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between, on the one hand, *Njáls saga* and several other sagas which I have called classical or 'realistic', and on the other, sagas of the post-classical kind and legendary sagas.

³⁵ On the fantastic elements in *Eyrbyggja saga* and their interplay with realistic elements, see also Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur í Eyrbyggju*, Studia Islandica, 42 (Reykjavík: Bókautgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1983), and Vésteinn Ólason, 'Máhlíðingamál: Authorship and Tradition in a Part of *Eyrbyggja saga*', in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon Centenary Essays*, ed. by Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs, n.s., 11 (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1989), pp. 187–203.

³⁶ Most thoroughly argued in Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 104–64.

³⁷ Robert Cook's translation in *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson, 5 vols (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997), III, 1–220 (p. 162). 'Njáls ásjána ok líkami sýnisk mér svá bjarttr, at ek hefi engan dauðs manns líkama sét jafnbjartan': *Brennu-Njáls saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 12 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1954), p. 343.

The latter sagas seem primarily interested in marvellous and fantastic events that occur in distant and vaguely depicted social and natural surroundings, while *Njáls saga* and other 'classical' sagas concentrate on human dramas acted out in a familiar landscape and closely tied to a particular form of society and a particular and finely nuanced system of values that govern the lives of people in that society. Characterization is also more simplistic in the post-classical sagas: characters are mainly drawn in black and white and the heroes are usually invincible, although there are exceptions like Grettir, while the characterization of most pre-classical or classical *Íslendingasögur* is much more mixed. The fact that the discourse of the saga, even a classical one, overlaps to a certain extent with different types of discourse, like the folktale or the saint's life, adds depth to its text, gives it an ambiguity or a polysemy not found in works with a weaker realistic element.

It is important to distinguish between what might be characterized as social and psychological realism on the one hand and realism in the descriptions of events on the other. One of the characteristics of *Njáls saga* that we may at first sight find reminiscent of modern realistic narrative is its description of events that seem a plausible part of the daily lives of common people. According to the saga Gunnarr and Njáll are certainly outstanding men, but they are not isolated from the world of the common people as are the characters of romance, kings and aristocrats; on the contrary, they belong to this world. This is of course a matter of convention, and it can be seen as merely accidental that in this respect the *Íslendingasögur* are more akin to the modern novel than most other types of medieval literature are.

Indeed, when we take a close look, the descriptions from daily life are not always as realistic as we may feel upon first reading them. There is a famous scene in *Njáls saga*, when the hero Gunnarr goes to his field to sow grain; his enemy Otkell rides with a group of men across the field, loses control over his horse, and wounds Gunnarr with his spur as he rides by. An experienced craftsman when it comes to realistic descriptions, Halldór Laxness, has pointed out that the text does not withstand scrutiny from a logical point of view, although it has a certain degree of verisimilitude at first sight:

Gunnarr does not become aware of seven people who ride across his field because the saga demands that they come close to him. He bends over while he is sowing, not because men do so when they are sowing grain, but because the story demands that he be correctly placed to receive a blow. As a matter of fact he seems to stand still in a bent-over position waiting for the strike.³⁸

³⁸ Halldór K. Laxness, 'Minnisgreinar um fornsögur', *Tímarit Máls og Menningar* (1945), 13–56; repr. in his *Sjálfsgæðir blutir* (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1946), pp. 9–66 (p. 51).

This example shows that the narrative conventions of the saga are different from those of the realistic novel when it comes to detail and logical coherence, but the scene nevertheless imitates a socially and psychologically plausible event: men riding in a group to visit their friends; a farmer at his work. The motivation of the dramatic event is the malevolent envy which underlies the aggressive attitude of Otkell and his men towards Gunnarr. Thus the general frame of the scene and feelings expressed are 'realistic' enough, and the author has created a successful artistic illusion.³⁹

Although the fantastic may be prominent in some of the sagas I call classical and considerably influence the atmosphere in some sections, it is certainly not a factor that decides the fate of the main characters. With regard to the fantastic element one could say that the textual world of sagas like *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Njáls saga* verges on the textual worlds of the historical legend and legal and historical literature on the one hand, and translated romances and hagiographic literature on the other, while folktale and *fornaldarsaga* are the obvious and sometimes noisy neighbours of most fourteenth-century sagas.

The *Íslendingasögur* have come down to us as literature, and one of the things that makes them fascinating is that we can see how they are formed by conflicting textual forces. The strongest influence behind them was the traditional heroic tale which in turn was an amalgamation of heroic song and historical tale or legend.⁴⁰ This oral genre, the heroic tale, seems to have been developing from formless historical traditions to a new form of heroic epic in prose,⁴¹ when the development was

³⁹ Aristotle was well aware that the creator of epic poetry can get away with telling his audience about inexplicable or unlikely events which do not disturb listeners or readers because they do not happen before their eyes: 'The marvellous should of course be represented in tragedy, but epic poetry, where the persons acting the story are not before our eyes, may include more of the inexplicable, which is the chief element in the marvellous' ('On the Art of Poetry', in *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. and intro. by T. S. Dorsch (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 31–75 (p. 68)). Indeed, modern novelists also frequently exploit our tendency to overlook the illogicalities or even impossibilities of certain situations when we are reading or listening to words. What we find acceptable and what objectionable in a story is also dependent on our expectations of each genre. Much of today's fantastic literature and film goes further than any *fornaldarsaga* in the description of inexplicable or unlikely events.

⁴⁰ See my *Dialogues with the Viking Age*, pp. 228–37.

⁴¹ That such a development preceded the written sagas has long been debated. For a sustained argument for the existence and development of oral tales with historical roots as precursors of the *Íslendingasögur*, see Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse*

intercepted by literary tradition and a new kind of narrative literature came into being. In this literature the voices of tradition are in constant interaction with the voices of literary culture: we note the influence from saints' lives, as in the above-mentioned scenes from *Njáls saga*, and from chronicles and historical writings in the genealogies and in references to important events outside the plot of the saga. Through the inclusion of details from daily life and through an ambiguous attitude to heroic morality — identification and admiration conflicting with skepticism — the sagas developed traits that make them appealing to modern tastes and can sometimes be seen as foreshadowing the birth of the novel. In *Njáls saga*, it seems to me, this development has gone furthest because here the fusion of convention and invention has been most successful, not least because of the balance between mimesis and fantasy in this work.

Fantasy enables us to escape from the monotony of everyday life and to enrich our lives. We have such a great capacity for imagination that life will (fortunately!) never lead us into more than a small portion of the situations we can imagine and live in the mind. Literature is one of the great means to add new dimensions to our experience. What we usually call fantastic literature tends to move as far away from daily life as possible; there our ideal self finds a prince or a princess, fights dragons in caves, or soars about the universe in a spaceship — or a helpless self stares terror in the eye. In order to familiarize the unfamiliar such literature relies on strong conventions and tends to (but does not necessarily have to) become stereotyped. Fantasy of a more discreet sort is a vital element in mimetic narratives too. It is frequently activated through a limited point of view and a skilful use of contrasts and parallels. It helps writers to highlight essential issues and concerns and make recognizable events more memorable and meaningful than they are in daily life. The need for that kind of narrative can become particularly pressing in times of social upheaval, when people feel that some important reality is slipping away from them, and, indeed, in such times literature of lasting value is often produced.⁴²

A saga like *Njáls saga* is undeniably full of fantasy; it is a magnificent, beautiful, and terrifying dream about the past. But whoever told the saga to us and gave it form must have felt that it was about a real recollected past, not an imagined one,

on *Method*, trans. by Nicholas Jones, Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004; originally published as *Túlkun Íslendingasagna í ljósi munnlegrar hefðar: Tilgáta um aðferð* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2002)).

⁴² This view is a central theme of my book, *Dialogues with the Viking Age*.

and that the story was true to the life of the past, however much fiction it was necessary to incorporate to make the story cohere. Seen in this light *Njáls saga*, as well as many other *Íslendingasögur*, can be characterized as a mimetic or realistic narrative. It is the high point of a literary convention with a strong mimetic element, and this element is strong because the concerns and values which ruled the lives that are depicted were still relevant for the community that produced these sagas. We can also say that there is an unbroken line between the ways people structured their own lives as narratives in the tenth and thirteenth centuries. When the dramatic past of the first centuries of Icelandic society became more distant, the mimetic element became weaker, and elements of conventional fantasy — which always had been an integral part of the Icelandic narrative tradition — became more prominent in literature. Sagas became more fantastic and often more stereotyped. All the same, the post-classical sagas are good literature, lively and entertaining. *Njáls saga* is something more. It affects us more profoundly, and it has a stronger individuality as a work of art; no other saga could replace it. The same could be said of many others of the *Íslendingasögur*, particularly those I have ventured to give the label 'classical', but certainly also some others.

The sagas can be placed at various points on a scale between realism and fantasy. Most of the *fornaldarsögur* are dominated by a strong fantastic element, and they tend to be stereotyped, although there we also find recognizable scenes from daily life. Many of the late or post-classical *Íslendingasögur* have similar characteristics, while the mimetic element is dominant in the classical sagas, although their world view is also a religious or mythic one without clear boundaries between the natural and the supernatural. A saga like *Njáls saga* is an embodiment of a creative narrative convention, and thus it responds to and interacts with the textual world that surrounds it. But the saga is also a response to the realities outside the text, and it represents human feelings about the basic values that keep or kept society functioning. That the burning of Njáll and his family in all probability took place at approximately the time the saga tells us is of course not unimportant, but the saga's more general relation to lived history is much more important. What it tells us about particular persons and events may be exaggerated, misunderstood, or invented, but the stories told are a response to something real, to words and feelings, to memories and fantasies; they are stories with roots in real life.

POLITICAL ECHOES: READING *EYRBYGGJA SAGA* IN LIGHT OF CONTEMPORARY CONFLICTS

Torfi H. Tulinius

Few have contributed more to understanding the rich complexity of the relationship between myth and literary expression in Old Norse-Icelandic medieval literature than Margaret Clunies Ross. In the two volumes of her *Prolonged Echoes* she gives us a remarkable analysis of the mental world of Old Norse myths, their relation to social structures, and how they continue to echo in the prose works of the thirteenth century. As a tribute to this achievement I would like to propose the following reading of a passage in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Though quite fantastic from a modern point of view, the episode can be shown to relate not only to deeply ingrained beliefs and representations in medieval Icelandic culture, but also to difficult political problems from the period in which the saga was written, issues which, I will argue, find an echo in the representation of the past.

Prosecuting Ghosts

The passage in question is the famous account of the wonders at Fróðá, told in chapters 49 to 55 of the saga.¹ The same summer that Icelanders decide to convert to Christianity at Þingvellir, a boat from Dublin arrives at the peninsula of Snæfellsnes on the west coast of Iceland. Aboard is a Hebridean women named Þórgunna. She is not young anymore but nevertheless quite handsome. She also owns some beautiful objects which fuel the desire of the frivolous Þuríðr, sister of

¹ I will quote from Einar Ól. Sveinsson's edition of the saga, *Eyrbyggja saga. Brands þátr Qrva. Eiríks saga rauða, Grœnlendinga saga, Grœnlendinga þátr*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson and Matthías Þórðarson, Íslenzk fornrit, 4 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1935).

Snorri the goði, who is the main character of the saga. Þuríðr is married to Þóroddr, farmer at Fróðá on the north coast of Snæfellsnes, and manages to convince Þórgunna to spend the winter in their home. Þuríðr believes that in time she will be able to persuade her guest to part with some of her treasures. Þórgunna moves in, but insists on working for her keep. She stays aloof from most members of the household, except Þuríðr's handsome young son, for whom she shows unreciprocated interest. She is a devout Christian and goes to church every evening.

Near the end of summer, the whole household is cutting and drying hay when a dark cloud floats in from the sea and releases a shower of blood over the people of Fróðá. Þórgunna is among them and the blood does not dry on the hay she is gathering or on her rake. In the evening Þórgunna is taken ill and calls Þóroddr, the farmer, to her bedside. She tells him that she does not believe she will survive this illness, and that he can dispose of her belongings after her death, with the exception of her exceedingly beautiful bedclothes. She insists that they be burned and also asks Þóroddr to arrange for her remains to be buried at Skálholt, site of the future bishopric of Iceland. She wants a proper Christian funeral, and this is impossible in Snæfellsnes since no priests have arrived in the area yet. Þóroddr promises to fulfil her dying wishes and Þórgunna passes away. Þóroddr is about to burn the bedclothes when his wife Þuríðr arrives and cajoles him into leaving the prettiest ones for her. Despite this, Þóroddr sends his men with Þórgunna's corpse to Skálholt. On their way, they spend a night at a farm where they receive nothing to eat. In the middle of the night they are woken up by sounds from the pantry. Þórgunna is standing there stark naked and preparing a meal for them. Nothing else happens. The men continue their trip and Þórgunna is buried at Skálholt.

When they come back to Fróðá, the wonders start there. The first one is the appearance, during the evening, of an *urðarmáni* ('moon of destiny') on the wall of the main hall of the farm, where the household sits around the fire. Then the shepherd starts to behave strangely and dies shortly afterwards. He will not stay in his grave and one night he assaults and kills another member of the household who also comes back. Four other persons meet their ends in this way. Now a strange sound is heard from the pile of dried fish, as if someone or something is eating it, but no explanation can be found for this. Þóroddr decides he needs to replenish his stock of dried fish and takes five men with him on a boat to a place where he has some stored. While they are away, a seal's head appears in the fireplace. A servant tries to make it go away by hitting it on the head, but it only rises higher and stares at Þórgunna's bedclothes. It is not until the young Kjartan comes and bludgeons it with a heavy hammer that it disappears.

Meanwhile, Þóroddr's boat has capsized and all six men on board drown. When Kjartan and his mother learn the news, they invite the neighbours to a funeral feast. To their surprise, Þóroddr and his men also come. The members of the household are not all that dismayed by this, and the author ascribes this to them only having been converted to Christianity recently. After the funeral, however, the dead men do not go away, and the six who had died earlier also join the group. Every night, twelve 'living dead' sit around the fire in the main hall to the severe discomfort of the living.

Now there is a third apparition: a black and furry tail protrudes from the pile of dried fish. The people of the household try to pull it out but it will not budge until it slithers back into the heap at such speed that it burns the people's hands. When the fish stock is investigated, all the flesh has been eaten away and only the skin is left. A new series of deaths begins and six people die. That is when Kjartan decides to go seek the advice of his uncle Snorri the goði at Helgafell, further east along the peninsula. He sends him back in the company of his son, Þórðr kausi, and a priest that has just arrived in the area. The priest is to say Mass, hear the confession of the members of the household, and consecrate water, whereas Þórðr and Kjartan are to burn Þórgunna's bedclothes and prosecute the ghosts in a trial to be held outside the main entrance of the farm (*dýradómr*). All of this is done, and the ghosts are obliged to leave the premises. This is how the wonders of Fróðá end, just in time to save Þuríðr, who had fallen ill while her son was seeking the advice of Snorri.

Investigating Wonders

This part of *Eyrbyggja saga* has excited the interest of a number of scholars, as it well deserves. It is indeed both complex and intriguing. Despite its complexity, it is quite well constructed. After the account of Þórgunna's arrival in Iceland and death at Fróðá, the narrative is structured around the promises made to her. The first one is fulfilled, and that entails the account of the transportation of her body to Skálholt and her apparition on the way there. The second one is broken and that seems to be the reason for the subsequent events at Fróðá. There is a pronounced ternary structure in this account: there are three strange apparitions and three sets of six people die. One of the many intriguing aspects of the passage is that it contains an unusually high number of elements which are unique in medieval Icelandic literature. The *urðarmáni*, the *dýradómr*, and the fact that bedclothes are at the root of the haunting are just a few of the motifs which do not appear in any other text in the corpus.

By far the most thorough study of the Fróðá episode was made by Kjartan G. Ottósson in a book published in 1983.² Kjartan Ottósson studies each and every element and discusses — as far as possible — its likely origin. His general conclusion is that some of the elements are deeply rooted in folklore and even pagan beliefs, while others might be memories of real events, albeit transformed through oral transmission. He also detects considerable Christian influence, both when it comes to individual elements, as well as in what seems to have been the saga author's attitude to the events he is portraying and the meaning he ascribes to them.³ Kjartan Ottósson thus considers the episode as partly traditional and partly authored to fit contemporary needs and beliefs, an attitude which is difficult to contest, even though in the following analysis I will try to add a few more weights to the side of the scales that indicates contemporary authoring.

In a short but important article, Ólafur Halldórsson added to Kjartan Ottósson's reading of the episode by concentrating on Þórgunna's origin in the Hebrides. With the support of evidence for the existence in Hebridean folklore of some sort of sea-god, he proposed as a hypothesis that the background of the Fróðá wonders was an ancient tale of a woman fleeing this underwater divinity, perhaps taking with her something belonging to it. Many aspects of Þórgunna's behaviour might be explained by this, for example her daily trips to church as well as her dying wish to be buried far away from the sea and under the protection of clerics.⁴

Scholars pursuing other goals have also taken an interest in the episode. Thus, Claude Lecouteux, professor of German medieval literature at Sorbonne University, deals with it in his book on ghosts and revenants in the Middle Ages. Even though he recognizes Christian elements in the story and clerical influence in the way it is told, he nevertheless argues that underlying it is a pre-Christian belief that was common to the peoples of Northern and Eastern Europe, and of even a larger area, that the dead could walk again.⁵

There seems then to be a consensus among scholars that a significant portion of the episode's contents can be ascribed to traditional beliefs. This is apparent,

² Kjartan G. Ottósson, *Fróðárundur í Eyrbyggju*, Studia Islandica, 42 (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1983). For a list of items which are unique to Icelandic medieval literature in this episode, see p. 9.

³ For his conclusion, see Kjartan Ottósson, *Fróðárundur*, pp. 114–17.

⁴ Ólafur Halldórsson, 'Gægst á ársalinn Þórgunnu', in *Davíðsdiktur: sendur Davíð Erlingssyni fimmtugum, 23. ágúst 1986* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1986), pp. 39–43.

⁵ Claude Lecouteux, *Fantômes et revenants au moyen âge* (Paris: Imago, 1986), pp. 106–11.

for instance, in Vésteinn Ólason's recent treatment of the supernatural in *Eyrbyggja saga*.⁶ However, a new note was struck in 2005 when John D. Martin published a stimulating article in which he endeavours to read the Fróðá episode from the perspective of continental medieval thinking on phenomena such as ghosts.⁷ He builds on Jean-Claude Schmitt's study of medieval concepts of ghosts and revenants, in which he identifies two conflicting, though both theologically grounded, beliefs concerning the nature of ghostly apparitions in clerical thinking in the Middle Ages. The former is ascribed to Saint Augustine and dismisses ghosts and revenants as images without any corporeal substance. The latter is already apparent in the writings of Gregory the Great and allows for the return of the dead in certain circumstances.⁸ Martin argues that these ideas would have been well known in Iceland by the time *Eyrbyggja saga* was written; of the ghosts at Fróðá he observes that 'these visitors from beyond the grave conform to distinctly high medieval Christian ideas about the dead that were current on the continent throughout much of the period from 1000 to 1500'.⁹

Though I tend to agree with Martin, I believe that an important caveat to be made — and which is indeed implicit in his presentation — is that Schmitt ascribes the latter view of the Church concerning the corporeal existence of revenants to the Church adapting to older and firmly entrenched pre-Christian beliefs among medieval Europeans. When applied to the Icelandic corpus, Schmitt's ideas do not therefore necessarily entail that there were no pagan survivals in the tales of revenants told there. However, Martin's reading is an encouragement to those who wish to view *Eyrbyggja saga*, its construction and its meaning, in the context of Icelandic culture and society in the period in which it was written, that is, the thirteenth century, instead of the period in which the events it describes are supposed to take place, the late tenth and early eleventh centuries. To use Margaret Clunies Ross's metaphor again, even though the episode at Fróðá may contain reverberations from a pre-Christian past, they resonate within a contemporary context which also echoes in the tale.

⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, 'The Un/grateful Dead – From Baldr to Bægifótr', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), pp. 153–71 (p. 167).

⁷ John D. Martin, 'Law and the (Un)dead: Medieval Models for Understanding the Hauntings in *Eyrbyggja saga*', *Saga-Book*, 29 (2005), 67–82.

⁸ Jean-Claude Schmitt, *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 26–27.

⁹ Martin, 'Law and the (Un)dead', p. 81.

The Shape of the Saga

There has been an ongoing debate among scholars over the years concerning the meaning of *Eyrbyggja saga*, arguably one of the most difficult sagas to describe in this respect. Indeed, the saga differs from most of the other sagas of Icelanders in that it is very difficult to define its plot. Theodore M. Andersson was unable to fit it into the conflict and revenge structure he uncovered for most of the family sagas and which he believed to be ultimately derived from Germanic heroic epic. It is indeed impossible to isolate a conflict-revenge cycle that governs the construction of *Eyrbyggja saga*.¹⁰ Using a different approach, Carol Clover argued that a more appropriate frame of reference was the aesthetic of continental narrative, and she identified *Eyrbyggja saga* as an example of a multistranded narrative, to be compared to the complex prose cycles written in French in the thirteenth century.¹¹ This is the same period in which the saga is believed to have been written.¹²

A third and interesting view of the composition of the saga was developed by Lee M. Hollander who identified correspondences between the construction of *Eyrbyggja saga* and the composition of skaldic poetry. Hollander focussed especially on the intricate interlacing of the sentences in the *dróttkvætt* stanza, woven into the framework provided by the constraint of metrical rules and metaphorical speech. He saw it as a model for the meandering narrative of the saga, wandering from one plot to another and with no obvious central character.¹³ Even though Hollander's approach is limited, it nevertheless has the advantage of clearly stating the view that the complexity of the saga is due to authorial design rather than lack of mastery of the material at the author's disposal. It also opens up perspectives for understanding the saga in the context of author-reader communication. As can be seen by the considerable number of skaldic stanzas contained in the saga, the author of *Eyrbyggja saga* expected his readership to be able to understand them, that is, to reconstruct a message from the entangled web of kennings of the skaldic stanza. In the same way, the reader would be expected to construct a meaning

¹⁰ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 28 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), pp. 153–62.

¹¹ Carol J. Clover, *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982), pp. 77–79.

¹² The most recent discussion of the age of the saga is to be found in Forrest Scott's scholarly edition, *Eyrbyggja saga: The Vellum Tradition*, Editiones Arnarnagæðar, A 18 (Copenhagen: Reitzels, 2003), pp. 19*–27*.

¹³ Lee M. Hollander, 'The Structure of *Eyrbyggja saga*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 10 (1959), 222–27.

from the 'series of scenes and stories', which seemingly 'follow the disordered course of life itself'.¹⁴

Other scholars have examined the composition of the saga with the intention of understanding its meaning for a thirteenth-century readership. In a stimulating article, Bernadine McCreesh argued for the importance of the account of the conversion of Iceland in the year 1000 as an organizing principle within the saga.¹⁵ According to her analysis, many narrative elements appear twice, once before and once after the conversion. Despite their similarity, a qualitative change has happened, and it is in the light of a general conversion of society with the coming of Christianity that the meaning of the saga is to be construed.¹⁶

In an earlier article, Vésteinn Ólason had also recognized the structural importance of the conversion in the saga.¹⁷ However, he also argued that its main organizing principle is the figure of Snorri, whom he believed to be the central character. He quotes Einar Ólafur Sveinsson's introduction to his edition of the saga, where he says that *Eyrbyggja* is 'a story which describes increasing organization, increasing order, at the same time as it tells of the increasing power of Snorri'.¹⁸ Indeed, the saga begins by telling of several generations of Snorri's forefathers, what brings them to settle in Iceland, and their establishment as *hofgoðar* — a blend of pagan priests and chieftains — on the northern coast of Snæfellsnes. There is a decisive break in the saga when we are told at length about how Snorri prevails in a conflict with his uncle over control of the family estate. After this, a series of more or less interwoven and interconnected plots are developed in which Snorri is sometimes the main character and sometimes a minor player. His ascendancy over the area increases as time passes, however, and the final chapters revolve around him.

Vésteinn Ólason compares the construction of the saga to an Icelandic glacial river. It runs down from the mountains in one stream, then spreads out over the plain in countless separate rivulets, and eventually gathers before flowing out into

¹⁴ This remark on the composition of *Eyrbyggja saga* was made by Gabriel Turville-Petre, *Origins of Icelandic Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1953), p. 242.

¹⁵ Bernadine McCreesh, 'Structural Patterns in *Eyrbyggja saga*', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 11 (1978/79), 271–80.

¹⁶ For a discussion of McCreesh's reading of the saga, see Rory McTurk, 'Approaches to the Structure of *Eyrbyggja saga*', in *Sagnaskemmtun: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson*, ed. by Rudolf Simek, Jónas Kristjánsson, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Vienna: Boehla, 1986), pp. 223–37.

¹⁷ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Nokkrar athugasemdir um *Eyrbyggja sögu*', *Skírnir*, 145 (1971), 5–25.

¹⁸ 'Saga um vaxandi "skipulag", vaxandi reglu, um leið og hún er saga um vaxandi veldi Snorra'. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, 'Formáli', in *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. lvi.

the ocean.¹⁹ Despite the multitude of separate but interwoven plots in the saga, there is a guiding force within the narrative and it is that of society ordering itself around and under the influence of the chieftain or *goði* Snorri Þorgrímsson. Vésteinn Ólason relates this view of Icelandic society in the tenth and eleventh centuries to the social reality of the thirteenth, when overlords were acquiring control over larger and larger areas of the country.²⁰ I agree with Vésteinn Ólason's reading of the saga as a whole, though I also share his reluctance to ascribe a simple message to a complex literary work which has a tendency to elude any attempt to attribute a clear and unequivocal meaning to it.²¹

A more appropriate attitude would be to consider it as reflecting (and reflecting upon) the ideology or ideologies of its time in a more or less conscious way. By ideology I mean the different ways social groups represent themselves and the world around them. These representations are more or less subconscious, that is, they are not necessarily articulated theoretically, even though they exist in the form of social practices. They also appear in mental constructions, among them narratives such as the sagas, which can thus be considered as ideological constructs. However, they are not simple objects of propaganda, proposing one simplistic world view or set of values in opposition to others. Instead, they can be shown to reflect the contradictions inherent in the ideology they express, much like myths as analysed by Claude Lévi-Strauss.²²

Law and the Supernatural

There is some evidence that the Fróðá episode can be read as such an ideological construct. To show this, I will take as a point of departure one of Kjartan

¹⁹ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Nokkrar athugasemdir', p. 8.

²⁰ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Nokkrar athugasemdir', p. 21. In a more recent article, Helgi Þorláksson has gone even further in attempting to understand *Eyrbyggja's* portrayal of chieftains from the perspective of the thirteenth century, since he reads its depiction of Snorri goði as a commentary on his thirteenth-century descendant Snorri Sturluson. See Helgi Þorláksson, 'Snorri goði og Snorri Sturluson', *Skírnir*, 166 (1992), 295–320.

²¹ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Nokkrar athugasemdir', p. 25.

²² For an example of Lévi-Strauss's approach, see his analysis of the Oedipus myth: 'The Structural Study of Myths', in *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke G. Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963; original French version: 'La structure des mythes', in *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958 and 1974)). I undertake a study of a series of sagas from a Lévi-Straussian perspective in my book *The Matter of the North: The Rise of Literary Fiction in Thirteenth Century Iceland*, Viking Collection, 13 (Odense: Odense University Press, 2002).

Ottósson's observations in his book on the episode. It concerns the way the revenants are forced to leave by prosecuting them in a *dýradómr*, that is, a trial held outside the main entrance to the farm. Kjartan Ottósson correctly indicates that *Eyrbyggja saga* is the only saga of the corpus which mentions this form of trial, and also the only one where law is used to counter a supernatural phenomenon.²³ Indeed, he knows of only one record of another occurrence of legal action against ghosts in the European Middle Ages. In an article from 1913, Alfred Jacoby suggested a parallel between the account in *Eyrbyggja saga* and a fifteenth-century record from a German monastery where the abbot successfully prosecuted a demon who had been harassing the nuns.²⁴ Jacoby therefore wants to place the Fróðá episode in the context of the Christian practice of exorcism, but Kjartan Ottósson rejects this on the grounds that there is evidence from pagan times of dead men being prosecuted, though in these examples they had not returned from the dead. He also claims there is a significant difference between the German example where the procedure involves nuns and a priest, and the Icelandic one which involves laymen.²⁵ Kjartan Ottósson's arguments seem rather weak, since exorcism was practised on both clerics and laymen in the Middle Ages and such rituals would have been known in Iceland by the time *Eyrbyggja* was written in the thirteenth century. It is therefore just as likely, if not more likely, that the author of the saga had them in mind rather than vague memories of pagan practices.

Kjartan Ottósson also has trouble explaining why the supernatural events at Fróðá needed to be ended by such a complex series of measures. Indeed, the bedclothes are burned, a priest has the inhabitants confess, sings Mass, and sprinkles holy water over the dwellings, and Snorri's son and nephew prosecute the ghosts. Kjartan Ottósson's approach is to postulate a progressive evolution of the narrative through oral transmission. The burning of the bedclothes is obviously an intrinsic part of the narrative, since it takes on the folk-tale form of a spell or a curse cast upon an object. However, as has already been said, Kjartan Ottósson believes the prosecution of the ghosts has roots in pagan practices. He also thinks that the actions of the priest might be a late addition to the narrative due to Christian influence.²⁶

Here again I disagree with Kjartan Ottósson, since there is nothing in the text itself that indicates that the Fróðá episode contains several layers. Indeed, the

²³ Kjartan Ottósson, *Fróðárundur*, p. 109.

²⁴ Alfred Jacoby, 'Zum Prozessverfahren gegen die bösen Geister', *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Volkskunde*, 23 (1913), 184–87; Kjartan Ottósson, *Fróðárundur*, p. 123.

²⁵ Kjartan Ottósson, *Fróðárundur*, pp. 109–10.

²⁶ Kjartan Ottósson, *Fróðárundur*, p. 108.

different aspects of the method used to rid the farm of the ghosts and other supernatural events are wholly integrated, since they are presented as instructions given by Snorri goði, which are carried out by his son, his nephew, and the priest. Kjartan Ottósson's ideas are based on the idea that the narrative of the wonders at Fróðá had been evolving in oral form over a long period. We have, however, little evidence for that. One other medieval source mentions these events, but the only detail it gives contradicts the account in *Eyrbyggja* and tells us nothing about how the wonders ended.²⁷ Even if we were to agree with Kjartan Ottósson that the Christian aspect of the way an end was put to the supernatural occurrences was added to the story later, we would have to explain the reason for this addition. It has been so well incorporated into the account that it must serve a purpose.

It therefore seems preferable to look at the episode as an integrated whole in light of the context of its time of writing, which scholars believe to be sometime in the period between 1230 and 1270.²⁸ What strikes me as the most salient feature of the method used to put an end to the supernatural events is the distribution of the roles. The son and nephew of the *goði* use legal ritual, whereas the priest uses church ritual. Thus the representative of each social group has his own arena of action. This strikes a familiar note to anyone who has studied the conflicts between Icelandic chieftains and the clergy in the first decades of the thirteenth century, since the strain on their relationship had so much to do with different interpretations of their sphere of action within society. This problem was of course not particular to Iceland, as it reflected a general trend within western Christendom in the period, when the Church was striving to increase its hold on society against the resistance of lay rulers.²⁹

Privilegium fori

One of the most dramatic chapters in the history of the struggle between clergy and laity in Iceland took place in the first decade of the thirteenth century, when a violent conflict broke out in northern Iceland between senior clergy and the

²⁷ The other source is *Eiríks saga rauða* where it is said that Þórgunna had a son with Leifr Eiríksson. His name was Þorgils and he came to Iceland shortly before the beginning of the wonders at Fróðá (p. 210).

²⁸ *Eyrbyggja saga*, ed. by Scott, pp. 19*–27*.

²⁹ For an account of this long and complex story, see for example R. W. Southern, *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin, 1970), pp. 34–41.

chieftains. On the clerical side, the main protagonist was the newly elected Bishop of Hólar, Guðmundr Arason (1160–1237). Leading the chieftains was the head of a family of magnates from Skagafjörður, Kolbeinn Tumason (d. 1208). There were two areas of discord. One concerned the resources belonging to the see of Hólar, which the chieftains felt they should control, since they did not trust Guðmundr's ability to manage them. The other involved the respective roles of the Church and chieftains in legal matters.³⁰ The particular issue which sparked the conflict was the *privilegium fori*, that is, sole ecclesiastical jurisdiction over members of the clergy. It meant a serious limitation to the power of the chieftains, who until then had been able to bring lawsuits against clerics and extract fines from them. Kolbeinn wanted to prosecute a priest in his area but Guðmundr opposed this, threatening Kolbeinn with excommunication. Progressively the situation degenerated and at one point Guðmundr's men began infringing even further on the chieftains' area of competence by extracting fines in the name of the Bishop from laymen.³¹ The chieftains would not tolerate this and attacked Hólar, driving the Bishop and his entourage away from the episcopal seat. For Guðmundr this was the beginning of a long exile from his see, and he never really regained control of it for the rest of his life. He spent some years in Norway but mostly wandered around Iceland, often in Western Iceland under the protection of members of the Sturlung family, especially Þórður Sturluson (d. 1237), the main chieftain of the Snæfellsnes area, where the action of *Eyrbyggja saga* takes place.

The question arises, then, whether the way the supernatural events at Fróðá are brought to an end could be some kind of commentary on the struggle for power in Icelandic society between clergy and laity. As has already been mentioned, the saga as a whole can be seen as demonstrating the power of lay chieftains in a globally positive light. It is worth looking at its beginning from this point of view. Chapter 4 tells how Snorri's ancestor, Þórólfr Mostrarskegg, settled the peninsula of Þórsnes, built a temple, and became a *hofgoði*. All the inhabitants of the region were to pay a tribute to the temple and follow the *hofgoði* in any endeavour, 'in the same way as *þingmenn* follow their chieftains' in the thirteenth century.³² This

³⁰ Orri Vésteinsson gives an account of Bishop Guðmundr's conflict with Kolbeinn Tumason in *The Christianization of Iceland: Priests, Power and Social Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 174–78.

³¹ On this particular issue, see Guðrún Ása Grímsdóttir, 'Um afskipti erkbiskupa af íslenskum málefnum á 12. og 13. öld', *Saga*, 20 (1982), 28–62 (pp. 31–32).

³² *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 9: 'Til hofsins skyldu allir menn tolla gjalda ok vera skyldir hofgoðanum til allra ferða, sem nú eru þingmenn höfðingjum.'

would mean that the office of the *goði* as an important lay institution of the Christian period had its roots in the pagan past, when political and religious leadership were in the hands of the same social group. The historical value of this account has been disputed.³³ It does seem likely though, given the fact that the word *goði* is related to *goð* (i.e. 'god'), that the power of the chieftains had historical roots in their role in pagan practices. Of relevance to the argument proposed here, however, is that this account is in accord with the idea that the saga expresses the way the lay chieftains of the thirteenth century grounded their social identity in history, not only their positions as leaders of men, but also the fact that many of them managed Church property and therefore received a portion of the tithes.

Another text is of interest in this context. It is the so-called *Úlfjótsslóð* ('Laws of Úlfjótr'). It purports to give a picture of Icelandic law at the time of the establishment of the Alþingi in 930. However it is only found in the *Hauksbók* version of *Landnámabók* (AM 371 4^o) which is from the first years of the fourteenth century, and in other late manuscripts. Since it is not in the *Sturlubók* version (AM 107 fol), many scholars believe it derives from the lost *Styrmisbók*, attributed to the cleric Styrmir Kárasen (d. 1245), who was associated with the Sturlung family. This places the origin of *Úlfjótsslóð* in the early thirteenth century. Other scholars believe it to be authentic and thus even older. The majority opinion, however, is that it is a learned attempt from around 1200 to reconstruct pagan law, but reflecting contemporary concerns.³⁴ Though not directly related to the

³³ Olaf Olsen argues against its value as a historical source in his doctoral dissertation from 1965, 'Hørg, hov og kirke: Historiske og arkæologiske vikingestudier', published in *Aarbøger for nordisk oldkyndighed og historie* (1965). See chapter 1, 'De norrøne kilder', especially pp. 34–49. Jón Hnefíll Aðalsteinsson defends its historicity, at least up to a point, in his *Blót í norrænum sið: Rýnt í forn trúarbrögð með þjóðfræðilegri aðferð* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, Félagsvísindastofnun, 1997), pp. 163–87. The most recent statement is by Gunnar Karlsson in his *Godamenning: Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), pp. 372, 383–89. He does not see any reason not to agree with Olaf Olsen, although he mentions many more examples from the sagas of a person both owning a temple and being a chieftain.

³⁴ See *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Íslensk fornrit, 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 313–15. See also Jakob Benediktsson's discussion of the passage in his introduction, pp. xcvi–ci. See also Olaf Olsen, 'Hørg, hov og kirke', p. 49: 'Jeg opfatter dem som et lærd forsøg på at rekonstruere hedensk lovgivning, skrevet omkring 1200 på grundlag af upålidende tradition og ved tilbageslutning af endnu rådende forhold' ('I view them as a learned attempt from around 1200 to reconstruct heathen legislation, written on the basis of untrustworthy tradition and with reference to a situation that still existed'). Jón Hnefíll Aðalsteinsson argues for the authenticity of many of the elements contained in the *Úlfjótsslóð*; see *Blót í norrænum sið*, pp. 163–87.

chapter of *Eyrbyggja saga* which describes the role of the pagan priest, the passage concerning the *Úlfhljótslög* also describes the *goðar* of pagan times. In addition to what the saga says about the toll paid to the temple, this passage says that the pagan *goðar* were chosen 'because of their wisdom and sense of justice' ('at viti ok réttlæti') and that it was their role to 'nominate juries at meetings' ('nefna dóma á þingum') and to 'direct lawsuits' ('stýra sakferli').³⁵

Whatever the historical authenticity of the *Úlfhljótslög*, they certainly express the chieftains' own opinion of their role in legal matters, a role they were prepared to defend even at the cost of excommunication, as we have already seen. It is therefore interesting that *Eyrbyggja saga* underlines the legal prerogatives of the *goðar* in opposition to the clergy when describing the way the wonders of Fróðá are ended. It is tempting to see both texts as expressing an ideology of Icelandic chieftainship in the first decades of the thirteenth century. The *goðar* ascribe to themselves the exclusive right to prosecute all members of their society and they justify this monopoly through a sense of moral superiority ('vit ok réttlæti'), as in the *Úlfhljótslög* passage. In the Fróðá episode, they are also given some kind of power over supernatural creatures, a power which seems to be part of their genealogical inheritance as can be seen in the way the apparitions fear Kjartan, Snorri's nephew, more than anybody else in the household.³⁶

This reference to the supernatural may seem on the surface quite archaic but it can also be seen to relate to what was going on in medieval society in general in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries when, in the words of Peter Brown, there was 'a redrawing of the boundaries between the sacred and the profane' and, as Richard W. Southern has shown, the lay aristocracy was being deprived of its claim to a supernatural foundation to their power by a Church which was becoming increasingly assertive of its monopoly over the sacred.³⁷ In the Fróðá episode, the power of the *goðar* to use the law transcends the world of the living by applying also to that of the dead. This gives it a metaphysical dimension that underlines the identity of this particular social class as superior to commoners and in opposition to the clergy.³⁸

³⁵ *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, p. 315.

³⁶ *Eyrbyggja saga*, p. 147.

³⁷ Peter Brown, 'Society and the Supernatural: A Medieval Change', *Daedalus* 104.2 (1975), 133–51 (p. 134); Southern, *Western Society and the Church*, pp. 36–38.

³⁸ See John D. Martin's remarks on this in 'Law and the (Un)dead', p. 81.

Conclusion: A Dialogue of Ghost Stories?

In a fourteenth-century saga of Bishop Guðmundr Arason there is a lively and colourful story of how he rid a region of the western fjords of the malevolent ghost Selkolla. An unbaptized baby was left on the ground and invested by an evil spirit. It began to haunt the surrounding area, sometimes appearing as a beautiful woman but on other occasions as a monstrous being with a seal's head, thus the name.³⁹ This was during the many decades the Bishop wandered around Iceland, staying outside of his own diocese. For a while he stayed in Steingrímsfjörður, probably under the protection of nephews of Snorri and Þórðr Sturluson who were the local magnates.

This was when Selkolla was brought to his attention and he successfully drove her out of the area. It is interesting to note that he did this in two ways. On the one hand, he used religious measures, singing Masses and raising crosses on the spots where Selkolla had disappeared under the ground. On the other, he engaged with her physically, beating her with his socks when she presented herself to him in the appearance of a servant girl. This means that not only his ecclesiastical office but also his individual person had power over the ghost. This is similar to the power Kjartan has over the ghosts at Fróðá. Not only do they fear him as a person, but his legal ability allows him to rid the farm of them.

It is interesting to note that Arngrím Brandsson, the author of *Guðmundar saga*, cites 'herra Sturla' as the originator of the tale of the Bishop's dealings with Selkolla.⁴⁰ There is a scholarly consensus that he is referring to Sturla Þórðarson (1214–84), one of the sons of Þórðr Sturluson. This means that the account is from roughly the same time and the same milieu as *Eyrbyggja saga*. The tale of the Bishop is, however, a contemporary account, grounded in events that were perceived to have really taken place. In contrast, the saga tells of happenings from a relatively distant past. It is tempting to imagine, though impossible to prove, that the story of the wonders of Fróðá is in some kind of dialogic relationship with popular accounts of the Bishop's ability to deal with the supernatural (attested both in his sagas and in folk tales recorded at a much later date). In the spirit of the struggle between the *goðar* and the Bishop, the saga asserts the chieftains' dominant role in legal matters, affirming their identity by circumscribing the sphere of action of the clergy.

³⁹ *Guðmundar saga Arasonar eftir Arngrím ábóta Brandsson, Byskupasögur III*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnaútgáfan, Haukadalsútgáfan, 1953), p. 277.

⁴⁰ *Guðmundar saga*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, p. 278.

STRUCTURALIST APPROACHES TO SAGA LITERATURE

Lars Lönnroth

Structuralist approaches to medieval narrative prose were not much practised in Europe before the late 1960s and were then generally inspired by narratologists such as Vladimir Propp, Claude Lévy-Strauss, A. J. Greimas, or Roland Barthes but also to some extent by the oral-formulaic theory of Milman Parry and Albert Lord.¹ Yet the first serious and systematic attempt to analyse the structure of Icelandic sagas was actually made as early as 1885 in a Swedish dissertation by the poet and scholar Albert Ulrik Bååth. His pioneering work, *Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor*, did not have much influence at the time, but its ideas anticipate structuralist studies of the 1960s and 1970s.

Bååth did not, however, use the word 'structure' but 'composition', and his ultimate purpose was actually not to analyse the narrative construction as such but rather to draw conclusions about the origin of family sagas and advance his own theory — usually referred to as the '*páttr* theory' — about their relationship to oral tradition. According to this theory, longer sagas had developed from smaller narrative units, *páttir*, which had circulated in oral tradition as independent short

¹ My essay deals only with structuralist narratology, not with structuralism in the study of Old Norse mythology, represented by scholars such as Einar Haugen, Eleazar Meletinskij, or Kirsten Hastrup, who have tried to describe the mythical universe of the two Eddas as a system of binary oppositions. This latter form of structuralism has been very aptly discussed and criticized by Margaret Clunies Ross in *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, vol. 1: *The Myths*, Viking Collection, 7 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994). See also Margaret Clunies Ross and B. K. Martin, 'Narrative Structures and Intertextuality in Snorri's *Edda*: The Example of Þórr's Encounter with Geirröðr', in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), pp. 56–72.

stories but had later been incorporated as episodes in long written sagas. To prove his point, Bååth had selected four family sagas for closer analysis: *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Njáls saga*.

The first of these, *Ljósvetninga*, turned out to be very loosely constructed and consisting of separate narrative units — in some cases actually called *þettir* in the saga text — that did not hang together very well. The second one, *Vatnsdæla*, turned out to be much better constructed: it did not contain a series of episodes but one continuous narrative about a particular chieftain family and its relation to Fate. The third one, *Laxdæla*, proved to be somewhat episodic in its first part but extremely well constructed in its second part, which in Bååth's opinion was also dominated by the theme of Fate. The fourth saga, *Njála*, is shown to be constructed out of semi-independent episodes but still superbly integrated and, in Bååth's view, subordinated to the basic theme of Fate. According to Bååth, its author 'had such control of his material that he wrote down his first line having the last line within his vision'.²

Bååth concluded that *Ljósvetninga* was the saga that was closest to oral tradition, while *Njála* and *Vatnsdæla* both represented a later stage in the development of saga writing, where literary authorship had prevailed over oral storytelling. He further concluded that the 'fatalist world view' ('den fatalistiska världsåskådningen') had determined the saga composition in the later and better composed sagas, which in his view had not, in their present form, existed in oral tradition but were composed by 'a real author' ('en verklig författare').³

These conclusions were severely criticized by Andreas Heusler, who was himself a keen observer of narrative form but also a firm believer in the oral origin of Icelandic sagas. During the first half of the twentieth century he became so influential as a saga scholar that he was able to dismiss Bååth's contribution completely. He pointed to the fact that several sagas, such as *Vatnsdæla*, did not show any trace of episodic structure and thus could not be used to support Bååth's theory. According to Heusler, there were several indications that long and well-constructed sagas in fact existed in oral tradition without necessarily consisting of *þettir*.⁴ Although Heusler's freeprose theory of saga origins was later challenged by the Icelandic bookprose school, his critical view of Bååth's '*þáttr* theory'

² Albert Ulrik Bååth, *Studier öfver kompositionen i några isländska ättsagor* (Lund: Berling, 1885), p. 159.

³ Bååth, *Studier öfver kompositionen*, p. 160.

⁴ Andreas Heusler, 'Die Anfänge der isländischen Saga', in *Abhandlungen der K. Preuss. Akad. der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Classe* (Berlin: [n. pub.], 1913), pp. 1–87.

prevailed for a long time and was still echoed by Theodore M. Andersson in his dissertation of 1964 about the origin of sagas.⁵

Yet it was Andersson who somewhat later would initiate a modern structural approach to sagas in his book *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, published in the series Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature.⁶ Somewhat surprisingly, he did not mention Bååth anywhere in this book, nor did he refer to Propp's *Morphology of the Folk Tale* or any other modern narratological work which had at that time started to exert influence on literary studies in the United States. Andersson appears to have developed his narrative theory entirely on his own, and it does not show any obvious trace of having been influenced by others, but he does mention in his preface that his manuscript had been read by three distinguished Harvard colleagues, Harry Levin, Albert Lord, and Einar Haugen, all three of whom were certainly at that time familiar with structuralist approaches to literature and folklore. Another Harvard colleague of Andersson's, Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson, had for several years been one of the leading advocates of Proppian narratology in the United States.⁷ It thus appears likely that Andersson may have absorbed, more or less unconsciously, some ideas from Propp as well as Bååth in his way of dealing with the narrative plot of sagas.

However that may be, Andersson proposed a simple but ingenious six-point scheme for analyzing the typical feud story contained in most family sagas. He demonstrated its usefulness by first applying it to one short saga narrative, *Borsteins þáttur stangarhöggs*, and then arguing for its applicability to most other family sagas, although with some important exceptions. The scheme looks as follows:

1. *Introduction*: the principal characters and their adversaries are presented together with their families.
2. *Conflict*: the honour of either side is challenged, setting the stage for a feud between the two families or parties.

⁵ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Problem of Icelandic Saga Origins* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 61–64.

⁶ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Icelandic Family Saga: An Analytic Reading*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 28 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

⁷ Propp's original Russian text had been published in the Soviet Union as early as 1928 but the first English translation, by Laurence Scott, was published in the United States as late as 1958 with an introductory essay by Svatava Pirkova-Jakobson: *Morphology of the Folktale* (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1958).

3. *Climax*: one of the principal characters kills one or several of his adversaries.
4. *Revenge*: the other side retaliates.
5. *Reconciliation*: some kind of settlement is achieved and balance is restored.
6. *Aftermath*: notes on the later accomplishments of the principal characters and their descendents.

One of the advantages with this scheme was that Andersson could combine it with an inventory of rhetorical devices used by the saga narrators at various stages of a feud story, for example the 'necrologies' about fallen heroes introduced right after their death or the 'foreshadowing' in the form of dreams or prophecies occurring before a catastrophic climax. Andersson thus provided scholars with a practical and much-needed toolbox for analyzing saga narrative, and it is therefore no wonder that his book was often quoted and referred to in later saga studies centering on narratology. His six-point scheme also worked excellently for short feud stories or *þættir* like *Borsteins þáttir stangarhogg*s, even though it did not work equally well for long and episodic sagas such as those analysed by Bååth.

Joseph Harris, who was originally one of Theodore Andersson's students, was inspired by him to propose a similar narratological scheme for analyzing *þættir* about Icelanders visiting Norway, one of the most common forms of short saga narrative. In an article entitled 'Genre and Narrative Structure in Some *Íslendinga þættir*',⁸ where he referred not only to Andersson but also to Vladimir Propp and other modern structuralists, Harris presented his own version of the Anderssonian six-point scheme as follows:

1. *Introduction*: brief presentation of the hero, a young Iclander.
2. *Journey In*: the hero travels to Norway and arrives at the court, where he is presented to the king (if he is not known there already).
3. *Alienation*: the hero gets into trouble at the court and a conflict develops between him and the king.
4. *Reconciliation*: the conflict is resolved and the hero is honoured by the king.
5. *Journey Out*: the hero returns to Iceland with increased honour.
6. *Conclusion*: not strictly necessary but may include 'a judgment on the man, mention of his descendants and homestead, and a closing formula'.⁹

⁸ Joseph Harris, 'Genre and Narrative Structure in Some *Íslendinga þættir*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 44 (1972), 1–27.

⁹ Harris, 'Genre and Narrative Structure', p. 13.

According to Harris, the six stages of the narrative may be regarded as the structural 'functions' or 'motifemes' that belong to this particular kind of narrative. The scheme may thus, in his opinion, be used to define the genre. In the last part of his article he argues that such a definition, from a literary point of view, is preferable to a definition based on the way texts were categorized and labelled in medieval Iceland, since these categories and labels, although important for the understanding of how Icelanders thought about literary texts, do not necessarily give us a clue to the actual construction of these texts, as structural schemes do.¹⁰ Harris obviously hoped that structuralist analysis would soon become one of the most important new methods in the literary study of saga literature.

Other younger saga scholars in the United States were at this time thinking along similar lines, inspired not only by Andersson and Propp but also by Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales*,¹¹ which had recently introduced a whole series of new concepts for analyzing the narrative building blocks of oral-formulaic epic composition. One of these scholars was Richard F. Allen, who in 1971 published a new book on *Njáls saga* containing several new 'critical approaches', including a hierarchical scheme for analyzing the narrative 'elements' of the saga text in the spirit of the oral-formulaic school.¹² At the lowest level of this hierarchy he placed 'minimal facts' expressed in (more or less) formulaic phrases.¹³ At the second level, minimal facts are combined to form 'motifs', defined as 'little blocks of formalized action' and also as 'small units of typical acts',¹⁴ such as welcoming a guest or striking a blow towards an enemy. At the third level, motifs are combined to form 'scenes', defined as 'the level of sustained individual or social action, as a compact unit of significant action which has a beginning, middle, and end'.¹⁵ At the fourth level, scenes form part of 'the chapter unit, if it is understood that this phrase need not refer to the physical chapter divisions in the manuscripts but to the patterned

¹⁰ Harris, 'Genre and Narrative Structure', pp. 21–27.

¹¹ Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960). Lord's book had a particularly strong influence on Robert Kellogg, whose chapters in his and Robert Scholes's book *The Nature of Narrative* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) were widely read by young literary scholars.

¹² Richard F. Allen, *Fire and Iron: Critical Approaches to Njáls saga* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

¹³ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, pp. 64 and 71.

¹⁴ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, pp. 65 and 72.

¹⁵ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, p. 65.

sequences of events which are components of a large theme'.¹⁶ At the fifth and sixth levels, chapters form part of 'episodes' and 'episode clusters' similar to the *þættir* discussed by Bååth.¹⁷ At the seventh level episodes and episode clusters are combined to form the 'plot' of the saga as a whole.¹⁸

Although this hierarchal system for analyzing saga structure was not as a whole accepted by other saga scholars, the concept of scene, as a formal structural unit, was further analyzed and developed some years later in an article by Carol J. Clover,¹⁹ where she refers not only to Richard Allen but also to A. U. Bååth, Andreas Heusler, T. M. Andersson, and the oral-formulaic school. She describes the typical saga scene as a basic building block of saga narrative, consisting of three parts:

1. *Preface*: the stage is set by the saga narrator describing the circumstances leading up to some
2. *Dramatic encounter*: presented in dialogue form and followed by a
3. *Conclusion*, where the saga narrator briefly describes the outcome of the encounter.

Carol Clover argues that such scenes are basic elements not only in family sagas but also in other types of Norse sagas, including (free) translations of French heroic poetry. According to her analysis, 'scenic narration is clearly the saga-man's modus operandi, and the tripartite scene is clearly a normative image, a mental template, operating in his mind'. Although she admits that motifs, themes, action patterns, and other elements may all to some extent give saga narrative its traditional stamp, 'these parts are best seen as secondary narrative characteristics, whereas scene may be viewed as primary both because of its nearly universal occurrence over a broad range of saga types and because of its seminal nature in the composition of individual works'.²⁰

In my own book on *Njáls saga*, which appeared in 1976,²¹ I was influenced by most of the authors so far mentioned, and I made use of several of their structural concepts, but I also tried to revise some of these concepts slightly in order to make

¹⁶ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, p. 72.

¹⁷ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, p. 72.

¹⁸ Allen, *Fire and Iron*, pp. 57–94.

¹⁹ Carol J. Clover, 'Scene in Saga Composition', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 89 (1974), 57–83.

²⁰ Clover, 'Scene', p. 81.

²¹ Lars Lönnroth, *Njáls saga: A Critical Introduction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

them even more practical as tools for literary history and textual analysis. Thus I found Bååth's 'þáttr theory' partly convincing as a way of explaining the relationship between the saga as a whole and its individual episodes, even though I did not accept his conclusion that it was held together by a pagan 'fatalist ideology', since the overall structure of *Njála* was, according to my own interpretation, dominated by Christian ideas and influenced by medieval hagiography and other forms of religious literature. I made use of Theodore Andersson's six-point scheme in order to analyse episodes within the saga, but I found it impossible to use that scheme for analysing the saga as a whole, as Andersson himself had tried to do. I proposed a simplified and revisionist version of Allen's theory of narrative elements, greatly inspired by Clover's analysis of scenic composition and by Lord's oral-formulaic theory. Yet I also made a study of the physical chapter divisions and other structural divisions in the *Njála* manuscripts in order to reconstruct how the saga writer had actually organized his narrative on the written page.²² My book was, in short, a typically revisionist work, which tried to combine structuralism with traditional philology and literary history without really satisfying the expectations of either camp.

Six years later Jesse Byock published his book *Feud in the Icelandic Saga*,²³ which is also concerned with structure but not so much the literary structure of saga narrative as the structure of the actual feuds and legal conflicts described in the sagas. Byock thus represents a shift away from literary studies to the anthropological study of social institutions and legal process, thus inaugurating a new trend in saga scholarship.²⁴ In his book he sharply criticizes the use of sequential schemes such as the ones introduced by Andersson and his followers:

Theories of fixed sequential order do little more than bring attention to gross patterns in the sagas, and the determination to find such an order has remained for years a stumbling block in the study of the sagas' narrative form. The results of the search have been chiefly a system of summarizing the sagas which touches only the dramatic high points and separates us even further from the sagaman, the saga texts, and the means by which the texts were composed. The major problem with theories of sequential order is that the sagas were not constructed according to uniform sequences. They were built, rather, by

²² The detailed results of this study had been presented in a separate article, 'Structural Divisions in the *Njála* Manuscripts', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 90 (1975), 49–79.

²³ Jesse Byock, *Feud in the Icelandic saga* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) [paperback edition 1993].

²⁴ This new trend has in later years been most forcefully represented by William Ian Miller, for example in *Bloodtaking and Peacemaking: Feud, Law, and Society in Saga Iceland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

combining three active elements — conflict, advocacy, and resolution — which define the Icelandic process of dispute and its settlement. [...] Conflict, advocacy, and resolution, as small units of action, substitute one for the other in no fixed order. That is, these active narrative elements, which I call feudemes, are not bound to a linear progression; rather, they cluster together in a variety of ways, and the results often form what critics have described as scenes or episodes. A cluster, because it may begin with any feudeme, is free of a rigid schema. The clusters form chains of feud, which are the backbone of Icelandic prose narrative; one or several chains make up an entire saga.²⁵

Byock is obviously right when he draws attention to the fact that events in a saga feud do not necessarily follow upon each other in a fixed sequential order. The action described in most sagas is thus, as Byock suggests, more complicated than any structuralist scheme would seem to imply, and the development of a saga feud is in fact often unpredictable. Advocacy and legal bargaining at the Althing may, for example, prevent an anticipated act of violence from taking place. Or a settlement may be broken because some character is not happy with it and decides to take revenge on his adversary. For such reasons, Byock's 'feudemes' may be more useful as conceptual tools than sequential six-point schemes when an anthropologist or historian is studying saga feuds.

Yet Byock seems to miss the point when he complains that such schemes only deal with 'the dramatic high points' of the story. For it is indeed these 'dramatic high points' that must be of primary concern for a literary scholar or critic, not the minute intricacies of feuding or legal advocacy. Byock's whole reasoning seems to be based on the assumption that the narrative structure of a saga text is a faithfully 'realistic' mirror of its feud structure. That assumption is hardly valid. Literary texts rarely mirror reality, not even in the sagas, and even though feuds are important in most sagas, they cannot alone determine how the narrator chooses to tell his story. In fact, the same 'feudeme' may in one text be presented as the great dramatic climax of the entire saga, embellished with poetry and impressive speeches, and in another text as a trifling incident, mentioned only in passing. A literary study of narrative structure is more likely to explain such differences than an anthropological study of feud structure.

Later literary studies of the sagas have, nevertheless, gradually abandoned the structuralist approach. Theodore M. Andersson, who initiated the modern discussion of saga structure, nowadays appears to have lost interest in this kind of study and has returned to a more classical form of literary history and criticism. The same thing may, at least to some extent, be said of Joseph Harris. Richard F. Allen,

²⁵ Byock, *Feud*, pp. 57–58.

unfortunately, seems to have left the field of saga studies. Carol Clover has continued to write important works about saga composition,²⁶ but she nowadays rarely refers to structuralist theory or the structural saga studies of the late sixties and early seventies. Not only in saga studies but more generally in literary studies, the stricter forms of structuralism seem to be a thing of the past.

Yet one very important work on saga structure remains to be presented: Tommy Danielsson's Swedish dissertation from 1986 on the construction of the Icelandic family saga.²⁷ This is the most ambitious work so far entirely devoted to structural analysis. It contains an extremely detailed study of the plot and narrative structure in *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Hænsa-Bóris saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, and *Vatnsdæla saga* plus several short *Íslendinga þættir* in the kings' sagas. Although Danielsson has learned much from his predecessors, he presents an entirely new method for analyzing structure, a method much more precise but also more complicated than anything proposed by earlier structuralists. In his English summary Danielsson briefly presents his procedure as follows:

Each saga is first of all divided into strands of action and then into conflicts. This is demonstrated in 'sketches of composition'. The conflicts themselves are split up into 'elements', each determined by an incitement. The elements consist of a succession of 'moments', each of them marked by a simple symbol, usually a letter. The moments can be a negotiation, a mobilization, an action, a confrontation, a balance and so on. The conflicts are presented in a 'conflict scheme', where each element is presented by a series of such symbols.²⁸

A single narrative element in *Ljósvetninga saga* ('Brandr hurts Þorbjörn') may, in one of Danielsson's conflict schemes, be represented by the following string of symbols:

FI1. P1. E1-A2.M1.P1.P1P2A2P2E1-K B F

Here, the numbers represent one of the two conflicting parties, each dot represents a scene-shift, each minus sign a negative outcome, and each letter some type of 'moment' according to the following key:

F = Prehistory or Conclusion

I = Incitement

²⁶ See in particular her *The Medieval Saga* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982) and 'The Long Prose Form', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 101 (1986), 10–39.

²⁷ Tommy Danielsson, *Om den isländska släktsagans uppbyggnad*, Skrifter utgivna av Litteraturvetenskapliga institutionen vid Uppsala Universitet, 22 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1986).

²⁸ Danielsson, *Om den isländska släktsagans uppbyggnad*, p. 90.

- P** = Negotiation
E = Mediation
A = Action
M = Mobilization
K = Confrontation
B = Balance

Since each one of Danielsson's conflict schemes consists of several such narrative elements, his 'sketch of composition' for each saga tends to be extremely complex, looking almost like the wiring diagram of some high-powered electrical installation. It may be noted in this context that Danielsson was an engineer before he turned to saga studies. Although his approach to the sagas may be difficult to master for most ordinary humanists, it is in fact both ingenious and, for the most part, more convincing than any earlier structural method proposed by saga scholars. In his analysis of specific texts such as *Ljósvetninga*, *Vatnsdæla*, and the *Íslendinga þettir* he is able to correct and on several points modify earlier analyses by Bååth, Andersson, and Harris. As Danielsson points out in his concluding remarks, his sketches of composition may be used not only to see what sagas have in common but also what distinguishes them from each other and thus to discern subgroupings within the large and rather heterogeneous corpus of family sagas. What his method cannot explain, however, is why some sagas are narrated in such a way that they are today read as great works of art, while other sagas are narrated in such a way that nobody cares to read them.

Perhaps that is one of the reasons why his structuralist method, though extremely scientific, has not been used by later scholars. Although his dissertation was justly met with considerable respect and admiration in a long (but not uncritical) review by Bjarne Fidjestøl,²⁹ nobody has tried to follow in Danielsson's footsteps. It would indeed be difficult to proceed much further in that particular direction.

So what can we learn today from the structuralist approaches to saga literature? In my opinion a great deal, even though some of the structural schemes and classifications introduced in the sixties and seventies have become obsolete and abandoned.

First of all it has become increasingly obvious that sagas are governed not only by a particular style but also by a particular narrative grammar or set of compositional rules different from that of other types of narrative. This was by no means

²⁹ *Samlaren*, 108 (1987), 79–83.

clear as long as the bookprose school dominated saga studies and saga texts were read primarily as the creative products of individual 'authors' such as Snorri Sturluson. On the other hand, it has also become obvious that the narrative elements and rules of composition are not quite as stereotyped, traditional, and homespun as early structuralists and believers in the oral-formulaic theory liked to think. Each of the best family sagas contain themes, motifs, and stylistic features that are unique or, in some cases, borrowed from foreign literature. Saga studies that emphasize simple narrative schemes, formulaic patterns, and recurring action patterns to the exclusion of everything else tend to be as one-sided and, in the long run, boring as a study of mankind entirely built on a systematic examination of the human skeleton.

On the other hand, one cannot see clearly what is individual or unique in a saga before its traditional elements and conventional narrative strategies have been properly understood. Perhaps one does not have to go quite as far as Tommy Danielsson did in his extremely detailed sketches of saga composition. It may sometimes even be an advantage from a literary point of view not to be overly precise in one's structural analysis. Without such an analysis, however, the magic of the greatest saga passages may elude us. For although the well-known scene in *Njála* where Gunnar says 'fögr er hlíðin' ('how lovely the slopes are') can hardly be reduced to a structuralist string of symbols like the ones introduced by Danielsson, it is certainly an advantage to be familiar with the traditional narrative grammar on which this scene is partly based. One can then see much more easily how the saga writer has changed his traditional material into something radically new and unexpected that will probably be remembered when all the conventional feud patterns have been forgotten.

RECONSTRUCTING SKALDIC ENCOMIA: DISCOURSE FEATURES IN ÞJÓÐÓLFR'S 'MAGNÚS VERSES'

Diana Whaley

Introduction: Skaldic Flexibility?

The art of the skalds is famously and exuberantly antinaturalistic, deviating in often quite extreme ways from the norms of everyday language and often tending towards the ludic rather than the communicative.¹ Yet far from being anarchistic it is highly regulated at every level: by tight metrical constraints, by patterning of diction, and by tendencies in word order and clause arrangement. Even content is subject to voluntary self-regulation by the skalds, as they constantly replay their favourite topoi: the hero reddened weapons, fed or gladdened the beasts of battle, boarded enemy ships, conquered territory, and so on.

This is 'art within a closed field' indeed,² and the conventions which distance the skaldic language from the everyday also mitigate its strangeness by guiding audience expectations, and hence guaranteeing intelligibility except where poets are too creative or poetry too corrupt. Meanwhile, a surprising variety of content, style, and tone is achieved, within the framework of the genre's customary constraints, through the ingenuity of skalds and the mental agility of their audiences. But if there are constraints, what are they? How closed is the field at each of the levels in which the art has its being? These questions come up at every turn in

¹ See, for example, Hallvard Lie, "Natur" og "unatur" i skaldekunsten', *Avhandlingar utg. av det norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo*, II. Hist.-filos. kl., no. 1 (1957); repr. in his *Om sagakunst og skaldskap* (Øvre Ervik: Alvheim & Eide, 1982), pp. 201–315; Russell Poole, 'The Cooperative Principle in Medieval Interpretations of Skaldic Verse', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 87 (1988), 159–78 (pp. 159–60).

² Carol Clover, 'Skaldic Sensibility', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 93 (1978), 63–81 (p. 81).

skaldic editing. Everyone can agree that kennings are highly systematic: an expression meaning 'battle' and containing 'storm, weather' as its base word is probably qualified by a weapon term or a name of Óðinn, a legendary hero, or valkyrie. But how rigid is the system; how many kennings do not fit the patterns established in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning* (henceforth *Skjaldedigtning*), *Lexicon Poeticum*, and Meissner's great compendium?³ Similarly, we can all agree that clauses can be interrupted and intertwined in a skaldic *helmingr* or half-stanza, but just how dislocated and non-obvious can the word order be compared with its hypothetical prose counterpart?

Various positions have been taken on these issues, and the scholarly sparring of Ernst Albin Kock with Finnur Jónsson over the correct interpretation of hundreds of skaldic verses arose above all from their fundamentally different premises: Finnur Jónsson operating with a tighter notion of what constituted a correct skaldic kenning, and Kock with a narrower concept of possible word orders.⁴ There is consensus in the middle ground, both between these scholars and more widely, but more unusual phenomena raise difficulties, which resist solution partly because of the imperfections of the manuscript transmission; our ignorance of performance style, for instance the extent to which variations of pitch or voice quality, pausing or gesture clarified the underlying syntax;⁵ and the hermeneutic problem of establishing what the norms are when existing editions embody individual decisions based on the assumption of certain norms.

These are among the problems addressed by all skaldic editors, and in recent years on a grand scale by members of the skaldic editorial project to which the dedicatee of this volume has made such an outstanding contribution.⁶ The same

³ *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, AI–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), BI–II (Rettet tekst), ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15; repr. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde og Bagger 1967 (A), 1973 (B)); Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931; repr. Copenhagen: Atlas, 1966); Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik* (Bonn: Schroeder, 1921; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1984).

⁴ Finnur Jónsson in *Skjaldedigtning*; Kock in *Den norsk-isländska skaldediktningen*, 2 vols (Lund: Gleerup, 1946–49) and *Notationes Norræne*, published in *Lunds Universitets Årsskrift*, n.s., 19.2–37.5 (1923–44).

⁵ See Kari Ellen Gade, 'On the Recitation of Old Norse Skaldic Poetry', in *Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. Heiko Uecker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 126–51.

⁶ *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: A New Edition*, to appear in nine volumes and parallel electronic version (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007–); henceforth 'Brepols skaldic edition'. Web site (spring 2006): <<http://skaldic.arts.usyd.edu.au/>>.

considerations apply equally well to another challenge of skaldic editing: the reconstruction of extended poems from fragments. In addressing this here, my aim is to explore how flexible a skaldic encomium might be in its configuration of discourse features; especially, can it switch from retrospective narration to historic present, and how much first-person reference to the skald as actor is to be expected alongside praise of the subject? Can a word like *gær* ('yesterday') appear in a formal poem, and if so what does it signify? When is *nú* ('now')? More specifically, I will be proposing some tentative solutions to problems arising from the work of Þjóðólfr Arnórsson; and in order to do this I will review existing methodologies and suggest a supplementary model of analysis which will hopefully be broadly applicable and worthwhile in itself.⁷

At the risk of a rather pedestrian presentation, I will be reasoning through the case of Þjóðólfr's verses on the career of Magnús Ólafsson step by step, hoping thereby to arrive at an acceptable way of presenting an edition of this spirited and accomplished poetry.⁸

Alternative Reconstructions of Þjóðólfr's Magnúsflokkr

As is well known, there exist no complete and continuous texts of skaldic encomia (in *drápa* form with refrains or *flokkr* form without) composed before the twelfth century. Rather, they are preserved as fragmentary excerpts in prose works, especially the *konungasögur* 'kings' sagas' and the poetological works *Snorra Edda* and the *Grammatical Treatises*. A modest reconstruction industry has therefore grown up, and there has been reasonable consensus among scholars as to the make-up of many poems. However, there has been contention, especially over the distinction between verses which originated in long encomiastic poems and those which were *lausavísur*, freestanding occasional verses, and the central subject of the following discussion, Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Magnúsflokkr*, is a pre-eminent example of this.

⁷ Discussions of reconstruction issues include Bjarne Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet* (Øvre Eirik: Alvheim og Eide, 1982), pp. 81–85 and passim; Russell Poole, *Viking Poems on War and Peace* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 3–23 and passim; Judith Jesch, 'Knútr in Poetry and History', in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, and Yvonne S. Bonnetain (Trieste: Parnaso, 2000), pp. 243–56; Diana Whaley, 'Reconstruction of Poems', in Diana Whaley and others, *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Editors' Manual*, 2nd edn (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 2002), pp. 7–12.

⁸ For vol. II of the Brepols skaldic edition, ed. by Kari Ellen Gade, forthcoming 2008.

The ‘Magnús Verses’: Þjóðólfr Arnórsson’s Poetry about Magnús góði

Thirty-four verses (thirty complete 8-line stanzas, three 4-line *helmingar*, and one couplet) are attributed to Þjóðólfr Arnórsson and have as their subject Magnús Ólafsson *inn góði* (‘the good’) of Norway (1035–46/47): those presented in *Skjaldedigtning* as *Magnúsflokkur* 1–25 and *Lausavísur* (henceforth *Lv*) 1–9.⁹ The medieval evidence on authorship is quite secure,¹⁰ as is the association of the verses with Magnús, on internal grounds such as the naming of the subject (*Áleifs sonr*, ‘Óláfr’s son’, 1 and 5) or his ship *Visundr* (4), or on external evidence, notably the embedding of the verses in prose narratives about Magnús. Thus we arrive at a corpus that I will refer to as Þjóðólfr’s ‘Magnús verses’. Meanwhile, we know from evidence reviewed below that there is a poem attributed to Þjóðólfr, addressed to Magnús, and called *Magnúsflokkur*. The problem is, do all thirty-four verses belong to it?

Previous Scholarship

There is a general consensus that nineteen verses belong to the *Magnúsflokkur*: those numbered in *Skjaldedigtning* as *Magnúsflokkur* 1–14, 19–22, and 25. I will call these the ‘core verses’ and the remaining fifteen ‘non-core’. Beyond that, the scholarship has taken three main positions — minimalist, compromise, and maximalist — envisaging a poem of nineteen, twenty-five, or thirty-four verses respectively.

Guðbrandur Vigfússon presented a minimal nineteen-verse *Magnúsflokkur* in his 1883 *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, printing the non-core verses as a single sequence of Þjóðólfr’s ‘*Visor* (1044–45)’.¹¹ Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson similarly listed only the

⁹ Þjóðólfr’s poetry is printed in *Skjaldedigtning* A1, 361–83, B1, 332–53. Although it is not ideal to privilege the decisions encoded in any one text at the outset, *Skjaldedigtning*, as the classic skaldic edition, is the natural reference point and all skaldic poetry cited in this paper can be traced through its indices; in the Brepols skaldic edition royal encomia will be printed chiefly in vols I and II. The ordering of the verses is not problematic and is not a major focus of this paper.

¹⁰ Unproblematic aberrations are the attribution of *Magnúsflokkur* 7 to Sigvatr in *Flateyjarbók* [ed. by C. R. Unger and Guðbrandur Vigfússon] (Christiania/Oslo: Malling, 1860–68), III, 281, which also cites *Magnúsflokkur* 5 and 6 anonymously (III, 274, 281). *Magnúsflokkur* 21 and 25 follow verses by Arnórr without a change of skald being announced, respectively in *Flateyjarbók* III, 283 and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* (*Fornmanna sögur* [ed. by Sveinbjörn Egilsson and others] (Copenhagen: Popp, 1831), VI, 91).

¹¹ There are actually sixteen verses, not fifteen, since Arnórr jarlaskáld’s *Magnúsdrápa* 15 is included, on the grounds that it is ‘in Hulda wrongly given to Arnor’ (*Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, ed. by Guðbrand Vigfússon and F. York Powell, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1883), I, 202).

nineteen as belonging to *Magnúsflokkur*, adding *Magnúsflokkur* 17 with a query, and remarking that the other [non-core] verses appeared to be *lausavísur*.¹² Neither scholar detailed his reasons, though Guðbrandur's sub-heading for the 'Visor' is revealing: 'His [Þjóðólfr's] own exploits when following Magnus'. He regarded them as improvisations composed early in Þjóðólfr's career: 'the fire of youth is in these rough cruel verses'.¹³ It is also noticeable that the verses excluded from the minimal *Magnúsflokkur* are the ones with present-tense descriptions of the action.

Finnur Jónsson in his autobiography recalls a brief meeting with Guðbrandur in Copenhagen, the year after *Corpus Poeticum Boreale* was published. The great man remarked that now there was nothing left for the young men to do except follow in his footsteps.¹⁴ Fortunately for us, Finnur was undeterred by this (if anything, he was spurred on by Guðbrandur's eccentric textual 'restorations'), and went on to produce his monumental *Skjaldedigtning*, but not before, in 1885, taking over the commentary on *Skáldatal* within vol. III of the Copenhagen edition of *Snorra Edda*, including the reconstruction (first lines only) of the œuvre of each skald.¹⁵ Hence unsurprisingly *Magnúsflokkur* according to both sources consists of the same twenty-five verses: the same core nineteen as in *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, plus *Magnúsflokkur* 15–18 and 23–24. Finnur rejected the other Magnús verses from the poem because he did not think Þjóðólfr used the historic present,¹⁶ though in fact his *Magnúsflokkur* contains some possible instances, and there are other inconsistencies (see Conclusions below). That he was far from dogmatic on this issue, and acutely aware of the difficulty of distinguishing encomium verses from *lausavísur*, especially in this case where 'kildene [. . .] fuldstændig lade os i stikken' ('the sources [. . .] leave us completely in the lurch'), is clear from his remarks on *Magnúsflokkur* in his *Litteraturs historie*.¹⁷

For the maximalist position we turn to Bjarne Fidjestøl's great re-evaluation of the skaldic encomia. His methodology prioritizes the very prose sources that

¹² [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslensk fornrit 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), III, 7, n. 1.

¹³ *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, I, 198–99.

¹⁴ *Ævisaga Finns Jónssonar eftir sjálfan hann* (Copenhagen: Hið íslenska fræðafélag, 1936), p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ævisaga*, p. 155. *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. by Sveinbjörn Egilsson and others (Copenhagen: Det Arnsmagnæanske Legat, 1848–87; repr. Osnabrück: Zeller, 1966).

¹⁶ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, III, 582.

¹⁷ Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 3 vols, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), II, 615.

Finnur thought left us in the lurch, and since they give virtually no grounds for differentiating *Magnúsflokkr* verses from others, Fidjestøl envisages a thirty-four verse *Magnúsflokkr*.¹⁸ Skaldic structures in his view are quite flexible, not only because *drápa* – *flokkr* – *vísur* – *lausavísa* present a continuum of formality, but also because he envisages the possibility of *lausavísa*-like verses being more loosely attached to certain encomia, for instance as a frame, or of encomia containing present-tense material that could be interpreted as historic present or else as *samtids-strofer* ('present-tense stanzas') inserted by a skald into a *flokkr*.¹⁹ In fact, he appears sufficiently convinced by the maximalist scenario that he slightly overrides his usual methodology to include Þjóðólfr's Lv 8, which uniquely among the Magnús verses is introduced in the manner of a *lausavísa* (see 'Manner of Citation' below). Fidjestøl's suggested reconstruction of *Magnúsflokkr* is one of his two most radical departures from *Skjaldedigtning* (the other being the treatment of Þórðr Kolbeinsson's *Belgskakadrápa* and *Eiríksdrápa* as a single poem).²⁰

Thus the reconstruction of *Magnúsflokkr* out of nineteen, twenty-five, or thirty-four verses depends largely whether present-tense and first-person narrative are believed likely in a skaldic encomium, and on the weight attached to the external and internal evidence, to which we now turn.

External Evidence for Reconstruction

Skáldatal: Range of Patrons and Poems

A rough guide to the known skalds of medieval Scandinavia is provided by *Skáldatal* 'List of Poets', which groups skalds under particular rulers, and hence confirms, among other things, that Þjóðólfr composed for Magnús *góði* and Haraldr Sigurðarson.²¹ General limitations are that *Skáldatal* does not name individual poems and that the two manuscripts, AM 761 4° and the Codex Upsaliensis (DG 11), do not always agree and are not necessarily reliable on every point.

¹⁸ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 133–34, 172.

¹⁹ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 84, 133.

²⁰ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, poems 44 and 24 respectively, pp. 172 and 171.

²¹ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, III, 254, 262.

Prose Contexts

More crucial for reconstruction attempts is the evidence of the prose works that preserve the verses. At best, the introduction to a verse will specify a poem title, as when *Magnúsflokkur* 2 is attributed to Þjóðólfr ‘í Magnússflokki’ (‘in *Magnúsflokkur*’) in *Magnúss saga góða* (*Heimskringla*) ch. 1, or at least a patron, as when *Magnúsflokkur* 3 is introduced ‘Þjóðólfr kvað svá um Magnús konung’ (‘Þjóðólfr spoke this verse about King Magnús’) in ch. 5. But none of the other Magnús verses is identified with a particular poem and hence, as with the great majority of skaldic citations, we must turn to the wider context for more help.

In the case of the Magnús verses, all but two (*Magnúsflokkur* 1 and 6) are preserved in *Heimskringla*, and all but four (*Magnúsflokkur* 1–4) in the younger compilation *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*; then there are five in *Flateyjarbók* (*Magnúsflokkur* 5–7, 21–22), three in *Fagrskinna* (*Magnúsflokkur* 5, 7, 22),²² and one in the ‘Great’ or ‘Separate’ *Óláfs saga helga* (*Magnúsflokkur* 7).²³ None appears in the main manuscript tradition of *Snorra Edda*, but the couplet *Magnúsflokkur* 1 is preserved in Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol).²⁴ None of the non-core verses occurs outside *Heimskringla* and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*.

Heimskringla is, then, the prime source, and here we find that thirty-one verses are included in the narrative of Magnús’s career, especially his campaigns against the Danes: his return as a boy from the east, precipitating the departure of the Danish ruler Sveinn Alfifuson (*Magnúsflokkur* 2–3); his voyage south to Denmark (*Magnúsflokkur* 4), where he extracts oaths from Sveinn Úlfsson (*Magnúsflokkur* 5); his defeat of the Wends near the Skotborg river (*Magnúsflokkur* 7); the sea-battle off Áróss (*Magnúsflokkur* 8–16); its aftermath: pursuit and harrying on Sjáland and Fjón (Lv 1, *Magnúsflokkur* 17–20, Lv 2–3); the battle off Helganes (*Magnúsflokkur* 21–22); its aftermath: pursuit and harrying in Skáney (*Magnúsflokkur* 23–24, Lv 4–8);²⁵ summary of Danish campaigns (*Magnúsflokkur* 25). Additionally, Lv 9 voices anxiety about Magnús’s encounter with his uncle Haraldr on the latter’s return to Scandinavia, and is cited in *Haralds saga Sigurðarsonar* (*Heimskringla*) ch. 20. It is hence so thematically and contextually detached from the other

²² *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum: Fagrskinna – Noregs konunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1984).

²³ *Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kgl. biblioteket i Stockholm Nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre Håndskrifter*, ed. by Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, 2 vols (Oslo: Dybwad, 1941).

²⁴ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, II, 496.

²⁵ Modern Kongeå, Århus, Sjælland / Zealand, Fyn, Helgenæs, and Skåne, respectively.

Magnús verses that I wish to exclude it now from further consideration as a possible part of *Magnúsflokkur*.

The fact that the remaining thirty-one verses fall within *Magnúss saga* (*Heimskringla*), albeit often widely separated and interspersed with poetry by Arnórr jarlaskáld and others, might suggest that they originated in a single poem. Before embracing this important conclusion, however, it is worth recalling that Snorri Sturluson (taking his authorship of *Heimskringla* on trust) was capable of citing from more than one poem without alerting his reader to that fact, since he alternates quotations from Arnórr's two poems for Magnús: his *Magnúsdrápa*, named in *Magnúss saga* ch. 1, and *Hrynhenda*, not named. This could be dismissed as a special case, since the octosyllabic metre that gives *Hrynhenda* its name immediately differentiates it from the *dróttkvætt Magnúsdrápa*, so it is instructive to look briefly at the practice elsewhere in *Heimskringla*, which is in fact rather variable. In the sagas of Magnús góði and Haraldr Sigurðarson the pattern tends to be that poem titles such as *Bersögglisvísur* (Sigvatr) or *Kálfsflokkur* (Bjarni gullbrárskáld) are specified once only, at the first citation from the poem in question; where no title is given, none is known from other sources either. The opening of *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar* names Glúmr Geirason's *Gráfeldardrápa* and Einarr skálaglamm's *Vellekla* a few times each, thus distinguishing extracts from the two quite systematically, whereas specific references are scarcer in *Óláfs saga helga*. On balance, then, while it seems unlikely that Snorri would have allowed the impression that all thirty-one verses belonged to *Magnúsflokkur* if he knew that they did not, we cannot necessarily expect meticulous source referencing from him. (The citation of poetry in *Heimskringla* and other kings' sagas would repay further investigation.)

With this in mind we are faced with a question of principle: should we avoid unnecessary multiplication of entities by assuming that a skald composed only one poem per prince, unless told otherwise? Fidjestøl adopts this premise as methodologically tidier, if arbitrary, but it is debatable in the case of major functionary poets at the courts of long-reigning, militarily active monarchs.²⁶

Manner of Citation

There are two main ways in which verses are cited in Norse-Icelandic prose works. The dominant manner in the kings' sagas is what we may call the '*svá*' type,²⁷ for

²⁶ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, p. 83.

²⁷ With Poole, *Viking Poems*, p. 7.

example, *svá/sem segir Þjóðólfr*, *þess getr Þjóðólfr*, or *svá kvað Þjóðólfr*, all amounting to ‘as Þjóðólfr says/said’ (Þjóðólfr here standing for any skald). The verses so introduced usually corroborate at least some of the preceding prose, and hence are commonly regarded as akin to modern footnotes; they can be called ‘authenticating verses’. This mode is also used in the poetological works to introduce verse fragments illustrating poetic diction or rhetorical devices.

The other main manner of citation, the *þá* type, can be illustrated by Þjóðólfr’s Lv 26–27 in the *Heimskringla* account of the battle of Stamford Bridge. King Haraldr, setting out to what proves his last battle, has spoken two verses. ‘Þá kvað ok Þjóðólfr: “Skalkak frá, þótt fylkir [...]”’ (‘Then Þjóðólfr also uttered a verse: “I shall not retreat, even though the prince [...]”’; *Haralds saga*, ch. 91). *Þá* tags normally herald verses which are uttered from the midst of the action by skalds who are present, and which can hence be termed ‘situational’.²⁸ Often the skald has been introduced earlier in the prose narrative and foregrounded there, and this I would call ‘staging’. (Where there is staging the *þá* tag is occasionally lacking.) Þjóðólfr’s appearance is not staged in the Stamford Bridge narrative, but it is, for instance, in the *Morkinskinna* anecdote which frames Þjóðólfr’s mock-mythic Lv 14 and mock-heroic Lv 15. These commemorate a fracas between a tanner and a smith witnessed by King Haraldr and his skald as they walked down the street, and were allegedly improvised at royal command and on the spot.²⁹ As for Þjóðólfr’s Magnús verses, however, the striking fact is that Lv 8 alone is cited in this way (in *Magnúss saga*, ch. 33), and then rather ambivalently. The tag is *þá kvað Þjóðólfr þetta* in most manuscripts, but *Fríðsbók* (Codex Frisianus, AM 45 fol) has *svá segir*, and there is no staging;³⁰ this is a parallel case to Lv 18, discussed under *Sexstefja* below.

²⁸ Cf. Diana Whaley, ‘Skalds and Situational Verses in *Heimskringla*’, in *Snorri Sturluson: Kolloquium anlässlich der 750. Wiederkehr seines Todestages*, ed. by Alois Wolf (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), pp. 245–66 (p. 252). As noted there, alternative English terms for the two types of verse quotation include ‘substantiating’ and ‘non-substantiating’; ‘evidence’ and ‘part of the story’; or ‘reports’ and ‘speech acts’. For a recent discussion of skaldic citation in the kings’ sagas, see Heather O’Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 10–77.

²⁹ *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 53 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1932), pp. 235–36.

³⁰ For the variant, see *Heimskringla: Nóregs konunga sögur af Snorri Sturluson*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 23, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1893–1901), III, 67.

The manner of citation is generally, and reasonably, taken as a quite reliable guide to the original status of the verse: a *svá* tag normally precedes one or more verses extracted from an extended poem, while a *þá* tag precedes a *lausavísa*. However, a strong case has been made by several scholars that some verses presented in prose sources as *lausavísur* (by being staged and cited with a *þá* tag) originally came from extended poems. Among their reasons are the following: some prose anecdotes and interlocutors are implausible, or clearly fabricated in order to elicit the verse; there is a demonstrable tendency, on the part of medieval scribes as well as modern scholars, to assume that features such as present tense and first-person utterances belong in the more dramatic setting of a *lausavísa*;³¹ and some *lausavísur*, on the basis of their content and/or style, make plausible entities when linked together. A *þá* tag and staging might therefore be seen not as a literary-historical statement ('this is a *lausavísa*'), but as an interpretation ('we understand this as a *lausavísa*') or even a narrative choice ('we are presenting this as a *lausavísa*') made at some point in the transmission, though of course the choice will often be prompted by the nature of the verse itself.

Should we then be equally sceptical about *svá* tags? Perhaps not equally: every verse cited from a named extended poem in the *Fagrskinna* and *Heimskringla* narratives of eleventh-century reigns, for instance, is prefaced by one. But we cannot rule out the possibility that a *svá* tag could mean 'we are choosing to present this as an authenticating verse'. In the case of Þjóðólfr's Magnús verses, to have staged any of them would have distracted from the succinct account of Magnús's campaigns. Moreover, there are complex, intermediate cases,³² and there are occasional discrepancies between prose texts, as illustrated by 'Hét á oss [...]' ('He egged us on [...]'), printed as the sole fragment of Steinn Herdísarson's *Úlfsflokkur* in *Skjalde-digtning*. This appears as a situational verse, uttered by the skald who is on board Úlfr stallari's ship, in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar* and *Haralds saga* (*Heimskringla*) ch. 61, while *Fagrskinna* and *Morkinskinna* treat it as an authenticating verse. To add to the confusion, the title is preserved in *Haralds saga* (*Heimskringla*) ch. 37: 'svá segir Steinn Herdísarson í Úlfsflokki' ('so says Steinn Herdísarson in *Úlfsflokkur*'), but without any citation at that point (and the alert *Fríðsbók* scribe omits this).³³

³¹ See Poole, *Viking Poems*, esp. pp. 8–14.

³² See, e.g., Poole, *Viking Poems*, pp. 8–10; Whaley, 'Skalds and Situational Verses', p. 254, n. 15.

³³ *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*, ed. by Jón Helgason and Jakob Benediktsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 62 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1952), p. 27; *Fagrskinna*, pp. 265–66; *Morkinskinna*, p. 209; *Heimskringla*, ed. Finnur Jónsson, III, 130 for the *Fríðsbók* variant.

The evidence of prose contexts, then, is vital, and in the case of Þjóðólfr's œuvre would suggest on balance that thirty-three of the Magnús verses are likely to belong to one extended poem, *Magnúsflokkur*, but it does not clinch matters as we would wish, and it is time to turn to the internal evidence.

Internal Evidence: Discourse Modes

The historic present and first-person references to the skald's own achievements have, as noted in Alternative Reconstructions above, been contentious issues in skaldic reconstruction, and they need, I believe, to be examined against a background of skaldic norms, and especially what I will call 'discourse modes' — types of utterance that make up the fabric of skaldic poetry.³⁴ The modes combine characteristic types of content with particular temporal stances taken by the skald in relation to his material; the linguistic markers associated with them are especially tense and person of verbs, pronouns, and deictic adverbials. I will begin by illustrating from *Magnúsflokkur* 6 (verbs in **bold**):

Minn vá sigr fyr sunnan	Unði ótal Vinða
snjallr Heiðabý spjalli;	Ellu konr at fella ;
nær frák skarpa skæru	hvar hafi gumnar görva
Skotborgar ó gotna.	geirhríð fregit meiri?

(My valiant confidant **won** victory south of Heiðabý; I **learned of** a bitter conflict of men near the Skotborg river. Ella's descendant [Magnús] **relished cutting down** countless Wends; where **might** men **have learned** of a greater spear-storm [>battle] being made?)

The dominant mode here is retrospective narration and description: the skald relates one-off, past actions in the preterite tense.³⁵ There is, however, a fleeting 'framing' device, pointing to the skald's activity as skald, in *frák* 'I learned of', and the final couplet includes a laudatory general comment in the form of a rhetorical question. The viewpoint is more immediate in *Magnúsflokkur* 16, with its present and perfect narration and description:

³⁴ My application of 'discourse modes' differs from the traditional fourfold model of narration, description, exposition, and persuasion, and from Carlota S. Smith's narrative, description, report, information, and argument (*Modes of Discourse: The Local Structure of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)). I have not succeeded in finding an established system that would entirely suit present purposes.

³⁵ This remains true however the syntactic and geographical problems of the first *helmingr* are resolved.

Misst hafa Sveins at sýnu, sverð-Gautr, fǫrunautar (hǫrð es heldr of orðin) heimkvǫmu (fǫr beima).	Hrærir hausa þeira, hreggi æst, ok leggi — sǫr þýtr auðs of ǫrum — unnr á sanda grunni.
---	--

(Sveinn's comrades **have** clearly **lost out on** their home-coming, sword-Gautr [>warrior]; the men's expedition **has turned out** rather harsh. The wave, stirred up by the storm, **tosses** their skulls and limbs on the sands' floor [>sea]; the sea **roars** over the envoys of wealth [>(generous) men].)

Finally, Lv 3, about the aftermath of the battle of Áróss, offers a retrospective summary of three battles (*vǫru* 'were'), but *sízt* 'since' locates them in the psychologically recent past, and the rest of the verse contains present statement and anticipation, while *dugir* [. . .] *rjóða* 'it's good to redden' seems to be a generalization with disturbingly immediate relevance:

Menn eigu þess minnask manna Sveins at kanna , víga Freyr, ³⁶ sízt vǫru , vef-Gefn, þrjár stefnur.	Vǫn es fagrs á Fjóni fljóðs; dugir vǫpn at rjóða; verum með fylkðu folki framm í vǫpna glammi.
--	--

(Men **have to remember**, Freyr of battles [>warrior], **to get to know** the weaving-Gefn [>woman] of Sveinn's men, since there **were** three encounters. There **is** a prospect of a lovely woman on Fjón; it's **good** to redden weapons; **let's take our place** with the ranked troop, forward in the tumult of weapons [>battle].)

A wider survey of skaldic compositions suggests that the main possibilities are represented here, and they are distinguished in what follows as:

Retrospective Narration and Description (R*)
General Comment (G*)
Framing (F*)
Present Narration and Description (P*)
Anticipation (A*)

R*: Retrospective Narration and Description

This mode, usually realized with preterite verbs in the third person (or second where a living ruler is addressed), forms the backbone of most skaldic encomia,

³⁶ So *Heimskringla*; the *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna* variant, *Freyr*, produces a reading of the first *helmingr* which lacks the apostrophe; this is adopted in *Skjaldedigtning* B1, 347, cf. A1, 377.

including *Magnúsflokkur*, however its exact length and structure are envisaged. Magnús launched a vessel out *þann tíð* ‘at that time’ (*Magnúsflokkur* 2); Sveinn pledged fine oaths *þar* ‘there’, east at the Elfr (Götaälv, *Magnúsflokkur* 5). Thus the events are situated in the ‘there and then’, not the ‘here and now’, with deictic adverbials matching the preterite verbs; cf. also, in the core *Magnúsflokkur* verses: *þann dag* ‘that day’ (10), *þá* ‘then’ (19), *þar* ‘there’ (12), *hizig* ‘there’ (21), and *þaðan* ‘from there’ (22); also *þar* in the non-core *Magnúsflokkur* 23.

Within R* there may be references to a prior or background action, as when *Magnúsflokkur* 15 declares that Magnús (had) cleared seven ships before (*áðan*) — presumably before capturing them.

G*: General Comment

While R* utterances locate events in a specific past time, G* statements concern ongoing, habitual, or enduring situations and can be cast in present tense, preterite, perfect, or future. The distinction is clear, for instance in *Magnúsflokkur* 25: ‘brand rauð buðlungr Þrænda’ (‘the prince of the Þrændir reddened the sword’) (R*); ‘berr iðula síðan | hann ept hervígþrennin | hæra skjöld’ (‘after three pitched battles he carries ever afterward the higher shield’) (G*).³⁷

Other types of G* statement include the laudatory (‘ort gat hilmir hjarta’, ‘the prince had a valiant heart’, Arnórr, *Magnúsdrápa* 18), the sententious (‘hugr ræðr hqlfum sigri [...] manna’, ‘men’s courage determines half the victory’, Þjóðólfr, *Sexstefja* 23), or the factual (‘hizig [...] es heitir | Helganes’, ‘where it is called Helganes’, Þjóðólfr, *Magnúsflokkur* 21).

An important subcategory of G* concerns habitual, consuetudinal, or typical action, as when Hallvarðr *háreksblesi* asserts that Knútr *inn ríki* (‘the mighty’) diminishes the hunger of the ravens (implicitly, by making carrion of his enemies) in *Knútsdrápa* 6. That such statements read like expansions of kennings (‘raven-feeder’ etc.) underlines their typical nature, but unless accompanied by generalizing adverbs such as ‘often’ or ‘never’ or (as in this case) other clear G* utterances, they could just as well function as P* (below), describing a particular battle, and this is one of the areas where the possibility of historic present in a skaldic encomium arises.

³⁷ *Iðula* ‘often, ever’ is construed instead with the *rauð* clause in *Skjaldedigtning*, B1, 338.

F*: Framing

Here the topic is not the central matter of the hero's deeds but instead the skald's activity as skald, and F* utterances can be cast in various grammatical persons and tenses. Some focus on the poem's content, such as the conventional *frák* 'I learned, I heard' (*Magnúsflokkur* 3, 6, 9), *hykk* 'I believe, I think' (*Magnúsflokkur* 7), or *satt*'s 'it is true that' (*Magnúsflokkur* 17), inconspicuously flanking R* statements, or 'þat vas frægt' ('that was renowned', *Magnúsflokkur* 12). Bridging content and poetic composition are statements such as Þjóðólfr's that Magnús provides material for poetry — 'selr of sigr at þylja [. . .] mér færi' ('gives me the chance to compose about victory', *Magnúsflokkur* 25). This is the nearest approximation in *Magnúsflokkur* to the self-proclaiming swagger so characteristic of the skaldic art, but Arnórr launches both his Magnús poems with confident calls for a hearing, for example, 'Magnús, hlýð til máttigs óðar' ('Magnús, hear a mighty poem', *Hrynhenda* 1).

P*: Present Narration and Description

This is the present-tense, or occasionally perfect, counterpart of R*, and both present and perfect are illustrated in *Magnúsflokkur* 16 above. P* differs from G* in its specificity and from F* in its focus on the events narrated rather than the poetry. It includes historic present, but for the moment no attempt is made to identify instances of this. Þjóðólfr's P* utterances are typical in relating mainly to the aftermath of battles. News of the Norwegian victory spreads: 'fregnat slíkt ór Sogni [. . .] konur hnipnar' ('the women in Sogn do not hear such news with dismay', *Magnúsflokkur* 15). The enemy have lost out on their homecoming and roaring waves dash corpses against the shore (*Magnúsflokkur* 16, above). Fire rages in five present-tense verbs as the civilian population is subdued on Fjón (Lv 2; cf. Lv 6), and the surviving enemy are pursued (Lv 4–7); the adverb *nú* 'now' underlines the 'presentness' in Lv 4, 5, 7, and 9, and contrasts with *fiðrð* 'last year' in Lv 7.

A*: Anticipation

There being no inflectional future tense in Germanic languages, futures are signalled by such means as present tense with future adverbials or other lexical indicators, modal auxiliary verbs, imperatives, or certain subjunctive constructions. In the absence of clear signals present tense can be ambiguous, as when *fregnat* above could be anticipatory. Þjóðólfr assures his audience that Sveinn will not be able to defend (*muna varða*) the land with words alone (Lv 1), and that it

is amazing if Magnús does not hold out ('undr's nema [...] fyrir haldi', *Magnúsflokkur* 18); 'nú's [...] hætt góðs friðar vætta' ('now it's risky [...] to expect a stable truce', Lv 9); further examples are in Lv 3 above.

Combinations of Discourse Modes

The discourse modes thus involve applications of the various grammatical tenses, and present tense can be found in all of them except for the retrospective R*. The more or less unbounded present tense in G* utterances ('X is the best warrior-prince ever') and the poem-focussed F* utterances ('I declaim a poem') are unproblematic and freely co-occur with R* in skaldic poems, often as intercalated clauses. Also unproblematic is the special case of direct speech, which can involve free switching of discourse modes, for example, "Gakkat inn", kvað ekkja' ("Don't go in", said the woman', Sigvatr, *Austrfararvísur* 5); A* and R*.

Historic Present

Having established some norms, then, it is time to grasp the nettle and investigate the question, crucial to skaldic reconstruction, whether, or how far, encomia may switch from a retrospective view of events (R*) to a simultaneous one (historic present as a subtype of P*) in which events known to be in the past are narrated *as if* happening at the time of utterance. As seen above, the recent scholarship has been more open to this possibility than the earlier.³⁸ The 'present' quality of the historic present is clearly marked by grammatical inflections, but its 'historic' aspect is often a matter of interpretation. Enemy corpses washing up against a beach as in *Magnúsflokkur* 16 above might have been surveyed by the skald as he crafted his lines ('true present' in a *lausavísa*), still there long after a battle (true present, within a formal encomium), or else as past-as-if-present (historic present, within a formal encomium). Thus the possibility of both *lausavísur* and formal praise-poems, and our imperfect knowledge of actual performance situations,

³⁸ Axel Åkerblom's often-cited 'Bruket av historiskt presens i den tidigare isländska skaldediktningen (till omkr 1100)', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 33 (1917), 293–314, explains away most of the potential instances, several of which are also mentioned here. The historic present is also known as historical present, present historic, or (aptly) narrative present; cf. Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 285, cf. p. 79.

make the historic present especially elusive in the early Nordic cultural context. Further, there is potential for ambiguity between P* and G*, noted under G* above, and the ambiguity does not stop with P* utterances, since A* can represent speculation about situations at the time of utterance ('true future' perhaps), or else evoke anticipation experienced in the past ('historic future').³⁹

Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's Magnús poetry presents an unusual array of potentially disorientating combinations of R*, P*, and A*, above all in the seven verses on the pursuit of the Danes after Helganes embedded in *Magnúss saga* ch. 33. In *Magnús-flokkur* 23 the skald celebrates in R* mode the rich booty he gained (as he predicted before, *fýrr*, to a woman) through Magnús's triumph over the Danes. *Magnús-flokkur* 24 then asserts in R* that Magnús previously (*áðan*) commanded an advance ashore, disembarked with his troop, and ordered ravaging, before switching into P* with 'there is tumult here; the horse charges east across the hills'; Denmark and Skáney are named. Lv 4 which follows is pure P*, as the skald and his comrades follow the banners south towards Lund. Lv 5 then contrasts immediate past with present action, amounting to, 'we fought; now the Skǫnugar are losing hope; fire blazes'. Lv 6 is mainly P*, a present-tense description of the torching of Denmark, but a single R* statement again makes a rhetorical contrast: 'We won (*hlutum*) victory, but Sveinn's men run (*renna*) wounded away'. Lv 7 explicitly highlights the parallel between past and present events: a pursuit across Fjón last year (*fjórð*) and the present chase, with Sveinn's men running now ('þeir nú renna'). The banners are fluttering this morning ('upp fara mǫrg í morgin | merki'). In Lv 8 the skald then uses P* clauses to bemoan drinking sea-water in the king's cause as they anchor off Skáney.

Which mode, then, dominates and guides the perception of the other? If P*, then the R* clauses are flashbacks to the recent past, for there are degrees of retrospection, while the P* clauses are true present, uttered from the temporal stance of the event as the horse heads east (or whatever), and the verses are best thought of as *lausavísur*. (Whether the skald really versified as he rode along is immaterial for present purposes.) If R* dominates, and the events are anchored in the past, then the P* is historic present, momentarily bringing them alive to the audience of a formal praise-poem. And when A* utterances are added to the discourse cocktail, they add a further dimension, a projection into the future, as we see in Þjóðólfr's Lv 3 above. The most striking impression here is that if this is historic present discourse, it is not straightforward ('weapons are flying, buildings are

³⁹ Cf. Åkerblom's "'hist." fut.', 'Bruket av historiskt presens', p. 295.

burning'), but supple and complex, involving the adoption of a whole new viewpoint in which the 'here and now' is that of the events. The speaker is not in a royal hall recalling distant events, but, at least imaginatively, there amidst the action, poised between recent past and future. If the non-core Magnús verses belong in *Magnúsflokkur*, then the poem alternates dramatically between this type of discourse and the more straightforward R*, and we are required to assume considerable flexibility on the part of skald and audience.

Comparative Evidence for the Historic Present

The case for believing in this degree of flexibility is not at first glance strengthened by the evidence of other eleventh-century encomia, for both there and in the more complete works of the twelfth century, retrospective narration and description (R*) strongly prevail. Where there are present-tense statements, they overwhelmingly refer to the present of the utterance, not the present of the events, and there is little that calls to be read as historic present, as the adoption of another temporal viewpoint.

Some verse-sequences exhibiting switches of temporal viewpoint may be considered special cases: the collaborative *Liðsmannaflokkur*,⁴⁰ for instance, or Sigvatr's virtuosic debriefing poem *Austrfararvísur* with its vivid 'jór rinnr aptanskæru' ('the steed gallops in the evening twilight', 11, P*) or 'út munu ekkjur líta' ('women will look out', 12, A*). Two *flokkar* attributed to Þorleikr *fagri* and Halli *stirði* and commemorating encounters (or intended encounters) between Norwegian and Danish fleets under Haraldr Sigurðarson and Sveinn Úlfsson are similarly flexible, but whether this reflects episodic composition as suggested by the context of the Þorleikr *flokkur* in *Haralds saga* (*Heimskringla*) ch. 34, or clever evocation of suspense as suggested by Poole, they are not standard encomia.⁴¹ Hallfreðr *vandræðaskáld*'s *Erfiðráða* for Óláfr Tryggvason, after fairly routine R* praises, veers in its final phase from agonizing uncertainty as to the King's fate at the catastrophe at Svölðr to resignation that he has perished, and the slightly shifting tenses mirror this.

⁴⁰ See Russell Poole, 'Skaldic Verse and Anglo-Saxon History', *Speculum*, 62 (1987), 265–98, and *Viking Poems*, pp. 86–115.

⁴¹ The 'Halli' verses are edited and discussed under the title *Friðgerðarflokkur* 'poem about peace negotiations' in Poole, *Viking Poems*, pp. 73–85.

Within more conventional encomia there are parallels to Þjóðólfr's present-tense description of the aftermaths of battles, and the question now is whether some of these may be historic present. Sigvatr's *Nesjavísur* 10 exults that the enemy are missing (*missi*, subjunctive) their homecoming (cf. Þjóðólfr, *Magnúsflokkur* 16), and 11 anticipates no taunting from the womenfolk (*frýrat oss*), and in each case a solid context of R* statements keeps the viewpoint retrospective. The same is true of references to beasts of battle in Óttarr's *Knútsdrápa* 10, Arnórr's *Magnúsdrápa* 15, and Grani's *Haraldsdrápa* 2, where the carrion beasts are wished joy of the slaughter. It may be that these are more true present than historic present, with the beasts of battle imagined as still there, savouring the grisly provender of battle as poet and patron savour victory. Less easy to explain away are present-tense statements in the midst of accounts of strife. Sigvatr's conventional but nicely balanced 'meeting of forces' motif in *Knútsdrápa* 4 has the Norwegians sailing from the north in the preterite (*þurðu norðan*), while 'en með annan | Qnundr [. . .] her sænskan ferr' ('Qnundr advances with another, Swedish, army'). The rest of the verbs are preterite, so this looks very much like a historic present.⁴² The present *ferr* is guaranteed by full rhyme (*aðalhendin*) on *her*; one could also argue that it was necessitated by the metre. Again in his *Erfðrápa* for Óláfr inn helgi ('the saint'), v. 8, Sigvatr has Swedes advancing in the present tense: 'þeir austan nenna' ('who make their way westwards'). Is this historic present, or a remark on an enduring attribute?

The normative assumptions made by Finnur Jónsson and others could well have led to the classification of further verses as *lausavísur* containing true present which might instead be considered as encomiastic extracts containing historic present, and indeed there are some possible instances. Sigvatr's Lv 2 introduces a formal poem (*brag*), his Lv 5 could belong in *Nesjavísur*, and his virtuosic laments for Óláfr helgi in Lv 21–27 could perhaps have been part of a longer sequence; their staging in *Magnúss saga góða* (*Heimskringla*) chs 7–8 might be seen as somewhat contrived. The further possibility of historic present in Þjóðólfr Arnórsson's *Sexstefja* is discussed below.

Turning momentarily to non-Norse literature, tense-switching involving historic present is common in the early Romance vernaculars — it would be spectacular in Chrétien de Troyes, if frequency did not render it routine — and in some Middle English poems. Chrétien's audience clearly coped with subtle changes of temporal viewpoint, and we might bear in mind the general intellectual

⁴² See Poole, *Viking Poems*, pp. 81–82, on the motif of converging fleets and on tense-shifting in this verse.

challenge presented by much oral poetry. Examples from the twentieth century include Yugoslav epics, often sung at ten to twenty 10-syllable lines per minute, and the Swazi *izibongo* praise poems, shouted very fast. 'Anyone who is not thoroughly familiar with a *sibongo* cannot possibly understand it, and even to a Swazi it is impossible to understand it the first time he hears it.'⁴³ This last must also have been true of the most abstruse skaldic verses, and perhaps larger structures too took some digesting.⁴⁴

Nevertheless, poems that are linguistically or generically more akin to Norse encomia tend to be resolutely retrospective: the Old English *Beowulf*, for instance, or the Welsh *Gododdin* poems, which commemorate a heroic defeat c. 600 at Catraeth (seemingly Catterick in North Yorkshire, not too far from the site of Haraldr Sigurðarson's last battle); the earliest manuscript is thirteenth-century and the textual history contested.⁴⁵ The imagery of mead-halls, weapons, and beasts of battles in these defiant verses resonates with that of skaldic encomia, and the discourse features are quite comparable. Historic present tense is all but absent, a possible example being 'they strike against him'.⁴⁶ The fourteenth-century Gaelic MacSween poem celebrates a great warrior and depicts a successful seaborne raid that never, as such, took place, but the poem is gloriously 'capable of transcending failure',⁴⁷ partly perhaps because its pervasive use of present-tense narrative and description gives a timeless quality to the description, putting it beyond proof or disproof. However, the poem also contains some enigmatic past-tense utterances and abrupt transitions.⁴⁸

⁴³ Ruth Finnegan, reporting, respectively, the observations of Lord in 1968, and Cook in 1931, in her *Oral Poetry: Its Nature, Significance and Social Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp. 122–23.

⁴⁴ Cf. Poole's thoughts on the ludic and the cooperative, referred to in the Introduction above, or John Lindow, 'Riddles, Kennings and the Complexity of Skaldic Poetry', *Scandinavian Studies*, 47 (1975), 311–24.

⁴⁵ *The 'Gododdin' of Aneirin*, ed. and trans. by John T. Koch (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997).

⁴⁶ Reconstructed text: 'Guanan' guarnau'; manuscript: 'Gwanan arnaw', *Gododdin*, ed. by Koch, pp. 118–19. At this point Jackson's translation has 'they charged upon him' (Kenneth H. Jackson, *The Gododdin: The Oldest Scottish Poem* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969), p. 148).

⁴⁷ Donald Meek, 'Norsemen and Noble Stewards: The MacSween Poem in the Book of the Dean of Lismore', *Cambrian Medieval Celtic Studies*, 34 (1997), 1–49 (p. 12). I am grateful to Russell Poole for this reference.

⁴⁸ Meek, 'Norsemen and Noble Stewards', pp. 21 and 26.

The larger survey that is needed might well confirm that, while the retrospective mode is the unmarked narrative norm, many medieval poetic genres, including some types of skaldic poetry (with some examples pre-dating Þjóðólfr), employ historic present in various ways. On the other hand, audience expertise and expectations would be shaped by the poetry they knew, and by generic considerations, and we have to come back to the point that there is little evidence of sustained use of the historic present in conventional skaldic encomia.

Person

The various discourse modes do not systematically map onto any particular grammatical person, but person is another discourse feature that shapes skaldic structures and is an important tool in the attempt to reconstruct them. Like many skaldic panegyrics addressed to living rulers, Þjóðólfr's *Magnúsflokkur* praises its subject through an alternation of third-person utterance with second-person verbs and apostrophes. Direct address to Magnús appears in vv. 1, 2, 3, 4 (the return to Norway and expedition to Denmark), 10, 19, 20 (Áróss and aftermath), and 21 (Helganes),⁴⁹ but is noticeably absent from the non-core verses, and meanwhile the non-core *Magnúsflokkur* 16 and Lv 3, cited above, seemingly address someone other than Magnús. This would be rather extraordinary in an encomium, though there are possible precedents: Sigvatr's *Nesjavísur* is in praise of King Óláfr but refers to one Sveinn in v. 9 and addresses him in v. 12, and his Lv 5 apostrophizes Teitr, but, as the prose evidence suggests, may belong in *Nesjavísur*. The same poet's *Vestrfararvísur* apostrophize Bergr (v. 1) and Húnn (v. 5) alongside clear addresses to King Óláfr.

First-person verbs and pronouns are another leading feature of skaldic poetry (and skalds frequently refer to themselves in the third person). The skald can figure in two capacities, often within the same poem: as narrator, reporting events (highlighted in F* utterances), and as actor, usually warrior, participating in events (highlighted in R*, P*, or A* utterances). Looking at the first-person component in Þjóðólfr's Magnús poetry, we find that the nineteen core verses contain five narrator utterances (*Magnúsflokkur* 3, 6, 7, 9, 25) and two actor utterances, both in first person plural and both attached to the battle of Áróss (*Magnúsflokkur* 9, 12).⁵⁰ The

⁴⁹ Depending on interpretation, *Magnúsflokkur* 12 could also contain an apostrophe.

⁵⁰ Again in *Magnúsflokkur* 12, GKS 1010 fol. (*Hrokkinskinna*) has the third-person variant *gerði*, and this is adopted in *Skjaldedigtning* B.

fifteen non-core verses contain no narrator utterances but twenty actor utterances (one each in Lv 3, 5, 6, 7, two in Lv 1, three in Lv 4, five in *Magnúsflokkur* 23, and six in Lv 8).

Could Þjóðólfr have put so much of himself into a eulogy on Magnús? The answer is not necessarily no. This is illustrated by *Magnúsflokkur* 23, in which the skald tells us, 'I carried off (*bark*) a Gautish shield from the battle'; 'this was my lot (*blauzk mér*)', 'I got (*gatk*) handsome weapons'; 'I gained (*fekk*) a helmet'; 'and I (had) said (*sagðak*) that before to the tranquil lady'. Although the verbs are mainly first person, there is also a third-person remark that battle took place in the summer, and more importantly a relative clause orientating the stanza in its closing words towards Þjóðólfr's patron: 'es hilmir | harðfengr Dani barði' ('where the valiant ruler thrashed the Danes'). So the skald's self-absorption may be seen as gratitude to the King who leads him to victory and fine booty; yet it is self-absorption nevertheless, and the tranquil lady would seem somewhat out of place in a royal encomium.⁵¹ Given that the verse is followed by *Magnúsflokkur* 24, which contains the present-tense *her's skark* 'there is tumult here', it might seem reasonable to regard both as compositionally separate from *Magnúsflokkur*. Similarly, Lv 8 contains two references to the King, but amidst reminders of how much the speaker has gone through for him — quenching his thirst with nothing but seawater. It contains five first-person verbs, and the only third-person verb is *liggr* in a statement that Skáney lies 'before us'.

Again we may turn to comparative evidence in order to judge how usual extended first-person action is within encomiastic poems, and again Sigvatr's *Austrfararvísur* provides a clear precedent, but again too its special combination of travelogue and encomium should be recalled. Skúli Þorsteinsson's verses on the battle of Svǫldr are another special case: so strongly first-person that they prompt one to reach for a term such as 'auto-encomiastic'. Sigvatr's more routine *Nesjavísur* contain first-person references to his own involvement, but these are kept to a tactful level (in vv. 7, 8, 10). Arnórr's *Hrynhenda* for Magnús opens with the skald's own voyages, but the abnormality of this was at least felt by thirteenth-century prose compilers, for v. 3 is cited as an example of *macrologia*, the inclusion

⁵¹ Women feature, usually as observers or direct or indirect victims of events, in Sigvatr's *Nesjavísur* 6 and 11, Skúli Þorsteinsson's *Poem about Svǫldr* 3, and the *Haraldsdrápur* of Grani (v. 1) and Valgarðr (3, 6, and 9). On direct addresses to women, see Roberta Frank, 'Why Skalds Address Women', in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Atti del 12° Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, ed. by Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1990), pp. 67–83.

of irrelevant material, in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* and is the subject of a grumbling protest from Haraldr Sigurðarson in the *Morkinskinna* account of its first performance.⁵²

We may conclude overall that, despite some precedents, the handling of person in the non-core Magnús verses goes beyond anything in known skaldic encomia.

Sexstefja

Turning briefly to Þjóðólfr's verses for Haraldr *harðráði* ('hard-ruling') Sigurðarson, they present a strikingly similar problem to the Magnús verses. They span 1035 to the early 1060s, the battle of Stiklarstaðir to confrontations with Norwegian rebels and Danish rivals, via adventures in Byzantium and the Mediterranean. Preservation in prose texts resembles that of the Magnús verses, only there are more in the poetological works, and four in *Hákonar saga Ívarssonar*. There is clearly a great commemorative poem, *Sexstefja* ('Six Refrains', though only one probable *stef*-refrain survives), and a question as to which verses belong there. Only v. 1 is explicitly cited from *Sexstefja*, though *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*'s ascription of v. 19 to 'the *drápa* Þjóðólfr composed about Haraldr' suggests that the compiler knew only one.⁵³ The poem as printed in *Skjaldedigtning* includes four verses, 28, 31, 33, and 34, which are preserved only in *Snorra Edda* or *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, and which are too vague or cryptic to attach with any certainty to Haraldr and hence to *Sexstefja*; Finnur did so because *Snorra Edda*'s citations from Þjóðólfr appear only to come from *Sexstefja*.⁵⁴ Of the remaining *Snorra Edda* citations, vv. 27, 30a, and 32 are united by harvesting imagery and tied into *Sexstefja* by the naming of Haraldr in v. 32. Fidjestøl, developing an observation by Björn M. Ólsen, suggested the order v. 27, then 32+30a as one stanza, which I find convincing, though I would not, with Fidjestøl, take their harmony of metaphor as a reason for slight reservations about including them in *Sexstefja*; nor do I worry about v. 29, which refers to *sonr Sigurðar* ('Sigurðr's son'); nor do I find Fidjestøl's view of vv. 30b + 31 as a single stanza

⁵² *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatiske afhandlingers prolog og to andre tillæg*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 12 (Copenhagen: Knudtzon, 1884), pp. 19, 81–82; *Morkinskinna*, p. 116.

⁵³ *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*, p. 339.

⁵⁴ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, III, 587.

persuasive, though it is true that v. 30b is separated from 30a in one *Snorra Edda* manuscript, AM 748 I b 4°, and has no obvious connection with it.⁵⁵

Present-tense utterances are sparse in *Sexstefja* as printed in *Skjaldedigtning*, and can sometimes be interpreted as G*, remarks on customary heroics: Haraldr gladdens (*lætr fagna*) the eagle and wields (*berr*) his sword (v. 30); he made arrows fall noisily (*lét hrynja*) from armour and wants (*vill*) to increase slaughter (v. 32). The alternative interpretation is of glancing instances of historic present. Verse 26 remarks on a reward of a mark given to the skald, but first-person ‘actor’ references are otherwise lacking from the Haraldr verses.

More tantalizing is a set of seven verses (Lv 18–24 in *Skjaldedigtning*) depicting a *leiðangr* or levy: the launch of Haraldr’s war-fleet, including a splendid new dragon-ship, from the river Nið and its stormy voyage to the Elfr. Lv 18 is introduced *pá kvað* in its sources, *Hákonar saga* and *Heimskringla* (except *Fríssbók*, which has *svá segir*), but without staging, and subsequent verses have *svá* tags.⁵⁶ The subject-matter fits the overall programme of *Sexstefja* well, though such coverage of a single voyage would be disproportionately lavish. These seven verses have been fully discussed by Russell Poole, who groups them with *Sexstefja* 12–17 as ‘The Battle of the River Nissa (from *Sexstefja*)’, and points out the ‘marked artistic unity’ within and between these two groups, produced by phonological and lexical concatenation.⁵⁷

Against these very good reasons for regarding the *leiðangr* verses as part of *Sexstefja* we must set the evidence of the discourse features, for in contrast with the retrospective third- (or occasionally second-) person norm, the verses are distinguished by numerous P* utterances, first-person forms, and direct address to a woman who observes the launch. Poole sees the present-tense verbs as historic present, and believes that the occasional preterite forms ‘establish that the speaker’s point of view is retrospective throughout’.⁵⁸ He gives the example of Lv 18, where the gold glows (*glóar*) on the dragon-ship and its stems bore (*bóru*) burnt gold, which is indeed an oddity, perhaps to be explained by metrical necessity. Otherwise, however, I believe the R* utterances can be as well or better read as flashbacks. Still in Lv 18 the skald tells a female interlocutor that he saw the great

⁵⁵ Fidjestøl, *Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 134–42, 172. His inclusion of v. 26 in a group of doubtfuls as well as in *Sexstefja* seems to be a slip.

⁵⁶ Poole commends the *Fríssbók* scribe for being right (*Viking Poems*, p. 69). This is a parallel situation to Lv 8, discussed above.

⁵⁷ ‘Cooperative Principle’, pp. 162–72; *Viking Poems*, pp. 59–72 (p. 69).

⁵⁸ *Viking Poems*, p. 68, cf. p. 79.

ship launched (*sák* [...] *brundit*) from the river; now it is lying (*liggr*) offshore gleaming magnificently, since (*síz* — a significant conjunction) it was launched (*ýtt vas*) from the roller. In Lv 19 again we seem to have two phases of the same action: the young ruler steered (*réd at stýra*) out of the Nið and (now) oars plunge (*falla*) into the sea. In Lv 24 Haraldr impelled (*þeysti*) his men to the Elfr, but very recently (*nú*), and is now overnighing (*náttar*) at the boundary. There are also A* utterances: the mighty oars, and the men wielding them, will be severely tested (Lv 20–21), and there is more than a hint that the Danes might flee (Lv 24). Thus, as in the non-core verses about Magnús, a temporal viewpoint wholly different from the dominant R* is adopted: in the manner of *lausavísur*, we are (at least imaginatively) in the present of the events, with brief glances into the very immediate past and future. The direct addresses to women in Lv 18 and 20 only add to this impression. Thus, if the *leidangr* verses formed part of *Sexsteffa* they were a rather extraordinary part which perhaps originally had a life of its own and was subsequently incorporated into the poem. Hence Þjóðólfr's verses about Haraldr Sigurðarson do not suggest a solution to the problem of the Magnús verses, but rather present a remarkably parallel problem.

Conclusions: Reconstructing Þjóðólfr's Poetry

It is time to draw together the main arguments emerging from the discussion above, along with some further considerations, for or against the various possible views of Þjóðólfr's thirty-three/-four colourful and stylistically enterprising verses about the campaigns of Magnús;⁵⁹ the parallel issue of the Haraldr verses is also addressed more summarily.

First, although a compromise *Magnúsflokkur* is in principle attractive, I would like to exclude from consideration the twenty-five verse scenario adopted in *Skjaldedigtning*, because of its lack of consistency. Lv 1, for instance, is presumably classified as a *lausavísa* because of its signs of immediacy: the adverb *gær* 'yesterday', P* and A* utterances, and first-person references. But there is present tense also in *Magnúsflokkur* 16 and 24, *gær* and anticipation of what happens next in *Magnúsflokkur* 18, and a stronger first-person element in *Magnúsflokkur* 23. For me, therefore, the question comes down to the relation of the core and non-core verses taken as a whole.

⁵⁹ The formulation 'thirty-three/-four' reflects the highly uncertain status of Lv 9 (see 'Prose Contexts' above).

The maximal solution, a single poem of thirty-three/-four verses, seems to have the external evidence on its side: the attachment, virtually undifferentiated, of most of them to a coherent sequence of events in *Magnúss saga* (*Heimskringla*) and *Hulda-Hrokkinskinna*. We know that prose writers could be wrong about skaldic poetry, and suspect that we do not always interpret their signals correctly, but these are minor reservations and it is reassuring in this case that the compilers and scribes show virtually no signs of unease at the temporal and stylistic variety of the Magnús verses, for example by creating staging that would account for P* and first-person utterances, or changing verb tenses into preterite. *Fagrskinna* and *Flateyjarbók* do not have any of the non-core Magnús verses, nor any of the *leiðangr* verses, but they are so selective that this is not necessarily significant.

A maximal *Magnúsflokkur* also has the practical merit of avoiding the necessity for awkward surgical cuts, especially in the series *Magnúsflokkur* 15–16, Lv 1, *Magnúsflokkur* 17–20, and Lv 2–3, which seemingly describe the aftermath of Áróss from a viewpoint cotemporal with events except for *Magnúsflokkur* 19–20, which address Magnús in exclusively R* clauses. It should also be noted that the wholly R* *Magnúsflokkur* 17 belongs closely with the more diverse *Magnúsflokkur* 18, since they both depict overland flight and the beating of trails, mention banners or standards, and employ the matching topographical phrases *of skóg* ‘through the forest’ and *of hauga* ‘over the hills’.

On the other hand, this solution (and the parallel maximal *Sexstefja*) produces an extremely unusual *flokkur*: over thirty-three stanzas long, allowing for some loss, and more concerned with pursuits than battles.

The nineteen-verse *Magnúsflokkur* envisaged in the minimalist view is fairly coherent, and the remaining, non-core, verses stand out from it. They gain immediacy through present-tense narrative and description and first-person references to the skald as actor: twenty of these, supported by adverbials such as *nú* ‘now’ (four times), *hér* ‘here’, and *hingat* ‘(to) here’. The focus all but leaves Magnús, even to the extent that someone else is addressed in Lv 1 and 3, just as, among the Haraldr verses, a woman is addressed in Lv 18 and 20. The style of the non-core verses also tends to be more naturalistic; for example Lv 4–8 contain no kennings, though their word order is quite complex.

A more fruitful kind of compromise than the twenty-five verse *Magnúsflokkur* rejected above might recognize both the separateness and the unity of the core and non-core verses. We will never know whether Þjóðólfr really composed verses as he squelched through Danish bogs, watched houses burn, or drank salt water, but whenever and wherever composed, they have the spontaneity of *lausavísur*. Yet they are not *lausavísur* of the ‘loosest’ kind, for instance Sveinn’s men ‘run’ (*renna*) in the non-core Lv 6 and Lv 7, just as the core *Magnúsflokkur* 8 shares *gerva/gqrva* at

the same position in line 7 with v. 6, and a particular pattern of 'warrior' kenning with *Magnúsflokkur* 9. The non-core verses, indeed, build up to create quite coherent sequences (those shown at 2 and 5 in the list below). The tradition of composing a verse sequence on a journey is known from Hofgarða-Refr's *Ferðarvísur* ('Journey Verses') and from Haraldr Sigurðarson's *gamanvísur* 'playful verses' (which find verbal parallels in *Sexstefja*),⁶⁰ and Þjóðólfr's verses might have been incorporated into the encomium either by himself (rather as Sigvatr might have built up the *Austrfararvísur*) or during the subsequent transmission.

In seeking to recover the original status of verses we find that the external evidence of prose contexts and the internal evidence of content, discourse features, and style seem to point in opposite directions, and if both seem less categorical on closer inspection, so that the arguments are less polarized, this does not help our reconstruction attempt. Nor do certain considerations which are neutral in the sense that they could cut either way in the argument. Þjóðólfr was renowned as an extemporizer, was evidently present at much or all of the action, and must have enjoyed the one-upmanship of proclaiming this in his poetry, since his (presumed) rival Arnórr had to content himself with a more remote account of the pursuit and harrying after the battle of Helganes (*Magnúsdrápa* 16–18), but none of this indicates whether particular verses were *lausavísur* or formed part of the *Magnúsflokkur*. The historic present remains a thorny problem. It is rare in eleventh-century poems, mainly characteristic of *flokkar* or sets of *vísur* arising from special circumstances, and despite the mental agility of skaldic aficionados, they would not have been accustomed to follow extreme fluctuations in temporal viewpoint in the way that, for instance, Chrétien de Troyes's audience would. On the other hand, most of the putative instances of historic present in standard encomia share with Þjóðólfr's non-core verses a focus on the aftermath of battles, and there are other precedents for switch of temporal viewpoint, including *Austrfararvísur* and *Liðsmannaflokkur*. Then there are points on which we will never have sufficient illumination. The texts are incomplete and their true performance situations unrecoverable. If the thirty-three/-four Magnús verses belonged to a single poem embracing diverse discourse features and multiple viewpoints, the audience might have been assisted by certain aspects of the performance or by linking prose narratives (*Begleitprosa*), but the former are unknown and the latter hypothetical.

While the evidence for particular reconstructions is too finely balanced to permit certainty, the necessity of arranging verses in an edition forces some hard

⁶⁰ Listed by Fidjestøl in the context of Haraldr's influence on Þjóðólfr's poetry (*Det norrøne fyrstediktet*, pp. 241–42).

choices. (The Brepols skaldic edition will also present rationales for its reconstructions.) Having reviewed the evidence, I am left not quite persuaded that verses such as *Magnúsflokkur* 6 and 16 and Lv 3 above could all have been designed as part of one and the same encomiastic poem, and in my view the solution that fits the facts best is to print minimal encomia in the form of a *Magnúsflokkur* of nineteen verses and a *Sexstefja* of thirty-one, together with short sequences of *vísur* with descriptive headings. Hence my proposed reconstruction for Þjóðólfr's œuvre as a whole (still using the *Skjaldedigtning* numbering for reference) is as follows:

1. *Magnúsflokkur*: *Magnúsflokkur* 1–14, 19–22, 25.
2. Verses about campaigns in Danish territories under Magnús Ólafsson, possibly attached to *Magnúsflokkur*: (i) *Magnúsflokkur* 15–16, Lv 1, *Magnúsflokkur* 17–18, Lv 2–3 (sequel to Áróss); (ii) *Magnúsflokkur* 23–24, Lv 4–8 (sequel to Helganes).
3. *Runhent* poem about Haraldr Sigurðarson: 1–4, as in *Skjaldedigtning*.
4. *Sexstefja*: *Sexstefja* 1–5, 7, 6, 25, 8–24, 26, 27, 32+30a, 30b, 29, 35.
5. Verses about Haraldr Sigurðarson's *leiðangr*, possibly attached to *Sexstefja*: Lv 18–24.
6. *Lausavísur*: Lv 10–17, 25–27.
7. Fragment, possibly from *Magnúsflokkur*: Lv 9.
8. Fragments, possibly from *Sexstefja*: *Sexstefja* 28, 31, 33, 34.

The presentation is regrettably fragmented, but this to me is preferable to an illusory appearance of certainty, and I hope it may do justice to verbal artefacts which gleam like multifaceted jewels even if their original setting is lost to us. It is the great poets who cause the most trouble, and Þjóðólfr is a poet of skill and panache whose art epitomizes skaldic flexibility. I hope too that the model of 'discourse modes' and the observations on temporal viewpoints above may suggest useful ways of capturing the splendid diversity of other items in the skaldic treasure-chest.⁶¹

⁶¹ I am extremely grateful to Prof. Kari Ellen Gade for reading a draft of this paper and to participants in the Skaldic Symposium: New Interpretations of Skaldic Verse, Reykjavík, August 11, 2005, and the Thirteenth International Saga Conference, Durham and York, August 6–12, 2006, for helpful comments when some of the above material was presented there. I am also pleased to acknowledge the award of a Major Research Grant by the Arts and Humanities Research Board (now Council) in support of work on skaldic editing 2003–08.

II. Old Norse Myth and Society

HOW UNIFORM WAS THE OLD NORSE RELIGION?

Stefan Brink

One often gets the impression from handbooks on Old Norse culture and religion that the pagan religion that was supposed to have been in existence all over pre-Christian Scandinavia and Iceland was rather homogeneous. Due to the lack of written sources, it becomes difficult to say whether the ‘religion’ — or rather mythology, eschatology, and cult practice, which medieval sources refer to as *forn siðr* (‘ancient custom’) — changed over time. For obvious reasons, it is very difficult to identify a ‘pure’ Old Norse religion, uncorroded by Christianity since Scandinavia did not exist in a cultural vacuum.¹ What we read in the handbooks is based almost entirely on Snorri Sturluson’s representation and interpretation in his *Edda* of the pre-Christian religion of Iceland, together with the ambiguous mythical and eschatological world we find represented in the *Poetic Edda* and in the filtered form Saxo Grammaticus presents in his *Gesta Danorum*. This stance is more or less presented without reflection in early scholarship, but the bias of the foundation is more readily acknowledged in more recent works.² In the textual sources we find a considerable pantheon of gods and goddesses — Þórr, Óðinn, Freyr, Baldr, Loki, Njörðr, Týr, Heimdallr, Ullr, Bragi, Freyja, Frigg, Gefjon, Iðunn, et cetera — and euhemerized stories of how the gods acted and were characterized as individuals and as a collective.

Since the sources are Old Icelandic (Saxo’s work appears to have been built on the same sources) one might assume that this religious world was purely Old

¹ See the discussion in Gro Steinsland, *Norrøn religion: Myter, riter, samfunn* (Oslo: Pax, 2005).

² For a new and excellent handbook on Old Norse religion, see Steinsland, *Norrøn religion*.

Icelandic. However, evidence for the existence of this apparently Old Icelandic religious world is also found in other parts of Scandinavia, and an assumption that it is confined to Iceland is, as is well known, inaccurate. Some of the stories and mythical themes preserved in Iceland are also depicted on picture and runic stones, and alluded to in runic inscriptions in eastern Scandinavia during the Viking Age. One such case is the famous story of Þórr fishing for the Miðgarðs-orrmr, a story that is told in the skaldic poem *Ragnarsdrápa*, the eddic poem *Hymiskviða*, in *Gylfaginning* in *Snorra Edda*, as well as being depicted on the Altuna runestone in Uppland, Sweden, on the Hørum stone in Thy, Denmark, and on a picture stone from Gosforth in England.³

There is one important source that can qualify our view of the pagan religion in early Scandinavia and that is place-name evidence. The problem with place names is that they represent only a fraction of the names once in use, although taken together the ones we know of represent a large body of evidence that provides clues to which gods and goddesses were worshipped and where. Place names therefore provide a means of discriminating between written sources. Another advantage with names is that they are unbiased; no individual determined which names should be coined, and no one had the power to control the naming process. The names therefore represent the beliefs and actions of the general population, with no hidden agenda or deliberate program. The other advantage with place names is that they provide a spatial dimension to the discussion, which makes it possible to use geography in the study of religion.

The study of place names related to the pre-Christian religion of Scandinavia has oscillated in intensity over the last two centuries. The field was very highly esteemed in the nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century,⁴ with a decline in interest from the 1950s, due to the contemporary critique of the romantic and nationalistic research agenda of earlier scholars and the lack of source criticism in earlier research. This trend was very strong and changed the

³ See Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, 'Thor's Fishing Expedition', in *Words and Objects: Towards a Dialogue Between Archaeology and History of Religion*, ed. by Gro Steinsland (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, Institutt for sammenlignende kulturforskning, 1986), pp. 257–78; Steinsland, *Norrøn religion*, pp. 199–202.

⁴ The highlights in research on Scandinavia were Magnus Olsen, *Hedenske kultminder i norske stedsnavne*, Videnskapsselskapets Skrifter II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse 1914, 4 (Oslo: Dybwad, 1915), later contextualized in relation to pre-Christian Norwegian society in his *Ættegård og helligdom: Norske stedsnavne sosialt og religionshistorisk belyst*, Institutt for sammenlignende kulturforskning, Serie A, 9a (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1926), both groundbreaking works for their time.

direction of historical research in general in Germany and Scandinavia, especially during the 1960s. The loose extravagances early scholars allowed themselves in interpreting, reconstructing, and evaluating sources led to a backlash against the study of place names in relation to pagan religion. Today there is definitely a new trend of focussing on pagan religion in Scandinavia,⁵ and young scholars have dared again to engage in research which in the 1950s and 1960s was considered to be controversial.⁶ No doubt the major research project *Vägar till Midgård* in Lund has also been important in supporting this trend.

An important, but in many cases misleading contribution was by Jan de Vries.⁷ In the second volume of his *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte* he presented several distribution maps with names of gods and goddesses in Scandinavian place names, such as Óðinn, Þórr, Ullr/Ullinn, Njǫrðr, Freyr, and Freyja.⁸ Unfortunately de Vries missed many names and, more problematically, mapped a lot of names that did not have a theophoric background or were very doubtful; the latter names were mainly field names he had found. De Vries's results were therefore very unreliable, and the reviews of his attempt were, in many cases, scathing.⁹ This present article is an attempt to present more reliable maps, although it is only a preliminary work.

For toponymic research on Scandinavian pagan religion, a turning point was a short article by Lars Hellberg in 1986 on pagan place names in the province of Uppland, Sweden.¹⁰ This programmatic article was later followed up by two symposia, in 1987 ('Old Norse and Finnish Religions and Cultic Place-names' in

⁵ New handbooks are popping up like spring flowers. Two major introductions are Rudolf Simek, *Religion und Mythologie der Germanen* (Darmstadt: Theiss, 2003) and Steinsland, *Norrøn religion*.

⁶ Three major and solid contributions are Per Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser: Förkristna sakrala ortnamn i Mälardalsregionen*, Acta academiae regiae Gustavi Adolphi, 77 (Uppsala: Kungl. Gustav Adolfs Akademien för svensk folkkultur, 2001); Neil Price, *The Viking Way: Religion and War in Late Iron Age Scandinavia*, Aun, 31 (Uppsala: Institutionen för arkeologi och antik historia, 2002); and Olof Sundqvist, *Freyr's Offspring: Rulers and Religion in Ancient Svea Society*, Historia Religionum, 21 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2002).

⁷ Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2nd edn, 2 vols, Grundriss der germanischen Philologie, 12.1–2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1957), II.

⁸ The maps are on pages 53, 116–17, 155, 194, 195, and 309.

⁹ See for example Jöran Sahlgren's reviews in *Namn och bygd*, 25 (1937), 183–84, and 46 (1958), 191–93.

¹⁰ Lars Hellberg, 'Hedendomens spår i uppländska ortnamn', *Ortnamnssällskapet i Uppsala årskrift* (1986), 40–71.

Åbo, Finland) and in 1990 (the 16th NORNA symposium 'Sakrale navne' in Gilleleje, Denmark).¹¹ Shortly thereafter came three *Stand der Forschung* articles written by the three doyens of Scandinavian onomastics at that time, Professors Thorsten Andersson (Sweden),¹² John Kousgård Sørensen (Denmark),¹³ and Jørn Sandnes (Norway),¹⁴ which represented the new attitude in the field. The most important modern work in the field, however, came in 2001 with a PhD thesis by Per Vikstrand on the sacral place names in the Lake Mälaren region, a seminal work, which is the obvious landmark for future research in this field.¹⁵

In the present study I have chosen to analyse theophoric place names containing the names of the gods/goddesses Freyr, Óðinn, Þórr, Ullr/Ullinn, *Niærþer/Njorðr, and Týr. In order not to drown in problems I have left out Freyja since there are particular linguistic difficulties involved in determining whether place names contain the name of the goddess or a word *frøy* (< **fraiwi-*) referring to '(good) growth'.¹⁶ As I stated above, but must emphasize again, the names presented here are the ones that I am as certain as I can be are theophoric, and they represent only a fragment of what once existed. Apart from the names discussed here, there are many other place names that are also theophoric, namely settlement names with no medieval name evidence and minor names, offfields and natural features, which also nearly always lack older written forms. Such names are

¹¹ For a short historical overview of research, see Lennart Elmevik, 'Fornnordiska gudagestalter och svenska ortnamn', *Saga och sed* (1995), 11–19.

¹² Thorsten Andersson, 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Ostskandinaviens', in *Der historische Horizont der Götterbild-Amulette aus der Übergangsepoche von der Spätantike zum Frühmittelalter*, ed. by Karl Hauck, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philol.-Hist. Klasse 3, 200 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), pp. 241–56; and 'Orts- und Personennamen als Aussagequelle für die altgermanische Religion', in *Germanische Religionsgeschichte: Quellen und Quellenprobleme*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Detlev Ellmers, and Kurt Schier, Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde, 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 508–40.

¹³ John Kousgård Sørensen, 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Südschandinaviens', in *Der historische Horizont*, ed. by Hauck, pp. 228–40.

¹⁴ Jørn Sandnes, 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Westskandinaviens', in *Der historische Horizont*, ed. by Hauck, pp. 257–66.

¹⁵ Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*.

¹⁶ The name of the goddess has even been thought to be unattested in place names, a stance presented by Elmevik in 'Svenska ortnamn med förleden Frö-', in *Ortnamn i språk och samhälle: Hyllningsskrift till Lars Hellberg*, ed. by Svante Strandberg, Nomina Germanica, 22 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 1995), pp. 107–15.

extremely interesting to analyse and have a huge potential, but the collection and analysis of material is overwhelmingly time consuming.¹⁷ It is notable, however, that the spatial distribution of these later names corresponds closely to the names presented here; hence they emphasize rather than contradict the spatial pattern I present below in the Appendix.

The theophoric place names formed using the name of the god Freyr are indicated by the genitive -s- (*Fræyslandum*, *Fræyshof*, *Frøskir*, *Frøsvi*). For Sweden I have included thirty-eight 'certain' *Frøs*- names, and for Norway twenty-two names, but here a larger proportion are uncertain. In Denmark we only have one 'certain' name with the god Freyr, namely the district name of *Frøs Herred* on Jutland. This presents, of course, a considerable imbalance across Scandinavia. This uneven distribution is actually even more pronounced. The Freyr names are very much concentrated in two regions: the first region — and by far the most important one — has its core around Lake Mälaren in central Sweden, with names running along the eastern coast to the north and to the south, and to eastern Västergötland. The second region is around Viken in Norway. Significantly, Freyr names are totally lacking in Trøndelag, Nordland/Troms, and Rogaland. They are very rare in all of western Norway, and the few cases we have here are problematic and more or less uncertain. We can also see that the Freyr names are practically absent — apart from *Frøs Herred* — in all of Denmark and southern Sweden. We therefore get a very distinct pattern: Freyr has a documented cult in the old Svea-dominated region in eastern Sweden and in south-east Norway, around Viken, incorporating Vestfold, Østfold, Hedmark, and Opland (see Fig. 1).

As mentioned already, many of the names from Norway are problematic and cannot be described as 'certain'. Only a couple of names seem secure, namely *Frøshov* in Trøgstad, Østfold (Fræyshof 1391) and *Frøishov* in Hole, Buskerud (a Fræyshofue 1342). Also the three names †*Frøisli* (Frøsli 1669), †*Frøysland* (Frøsslanndt 1592), and †*Frøysaker* (Frøssagger 1592) in N. Land, Opland, look fairly 'secure', occurring more or less together in a small district, although all lack old name forms. An interesting but problematic name in Norway, which has been used as a parallel in connection with the famous name *Njarðarlog*, is the farm name *Frøitlog* in Sokndal in Rogaland, western Norway, reconstructed as †*Frøyslog*.¹⁸ This

¹⁷ For important contributions on this matter, see especially Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*.

¹⁸ See for example Sophus Bugge in *NG*, XVI, 279; Magnus Olsen in *NG*, x, 9–10, and in *Det gamle norske ønavn Njarðarlog*, Christiania videnskabs-selskabs forhandler for 1905, 5 (Oslo: Dybwad, 1905); and *NSL*, p. 118. For these and other abbreviations used below, see the list of Abbreviations at the end of the Appendix.

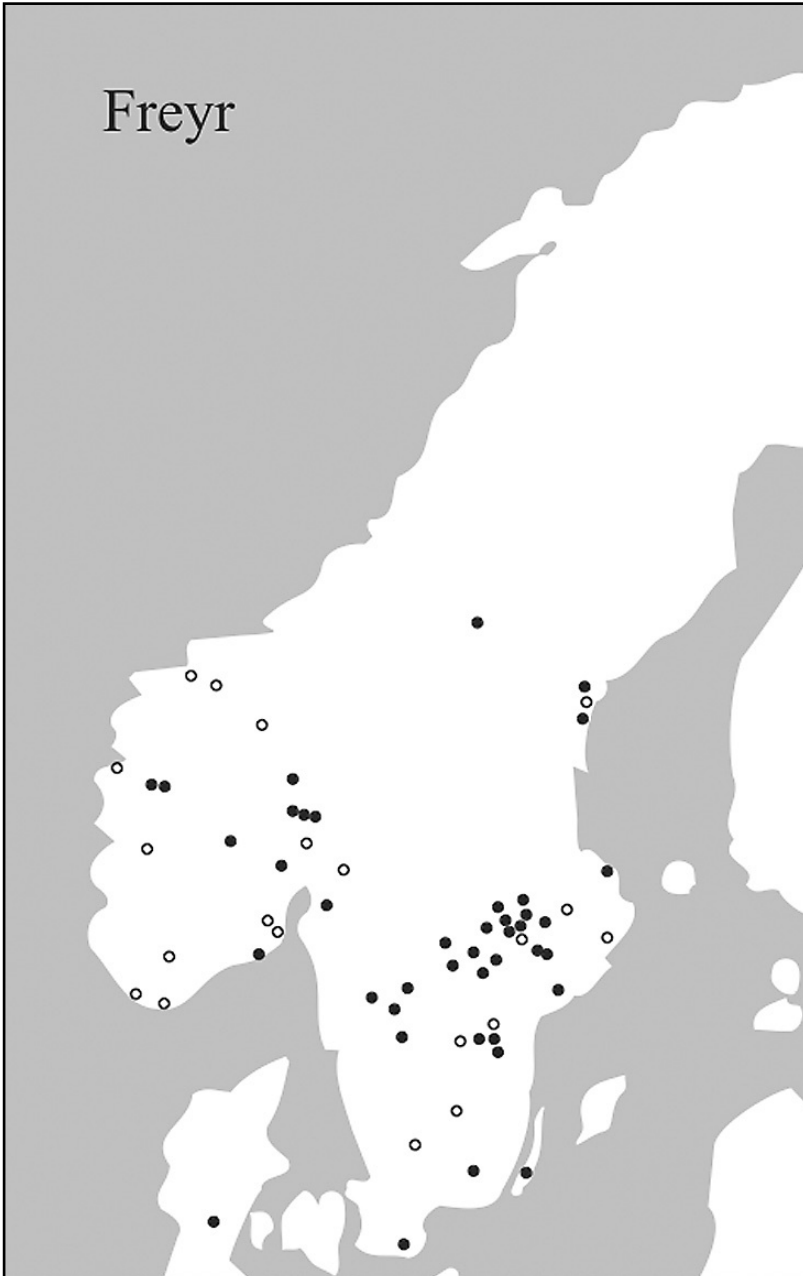


Figure 1. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Freyr (open circles are uncertain).

reconstruction is not obvious when we consult the fairly young written forms of the name: Fretlandt 1500s, Fretlonn 1500s, Føtland, Frøttlannd 1563, Frødløff 1567, Frøtløff 1610, Frøtleff 1616, 1668, Frøtløv 1723. Sophus Bugge took the liberty of seeing the god's name Freyr here and the word *lög* 'laws', and assumes the name was once used for a law district where Freyr had a special role, presumably in a communal cult.¹⁹ This interpretation must be considered uncertain.

In Sweden, on the other hand, there are many Freyr names that seem to be very 'secure': eleven *Fröslund(a)*, eight *Frösvi*, two *Frösåker*, a *Fröseke* ('the oak grove dedicated to Freyr'), and two names ending in *-tuna*. In Uppland we have a parallel to the Danish *Frøs Herred* in the old district name of *Frösthult* (frøstolpt 1314), containing the word OSw *tolpt*, referring to a minor district in the ancient naval organization, the *leding*.

The distinct pattern of Freyr names found in the old Svea-dominated area of eastern Sweden seems to corroborate the evidence of Old Norse literature, where Freyr is often called a *sviagøð* ('god of the Svíar'),²⁰ and in poems such as *Haustlång*, which names the Swedes as *allar áttir Ingvifreys* ('all Ingvi-Freyr's family'). There is also Saxo's mention in Book I of *Gesta Danorum* of a *Freyrblót* ('sacrifice to Freyr') among the Swedes, and his claims that 'the most valiant of the Svear [. . .] were kinsmen of the divine Frø' and that Freyr was a Swedish ruler ('Rex Suetiæ Frø').²¹ In addition Adam of Bremen describes a well-equipped Freyr in the pagan 'temple' in Uppsala in his *Gesta* (4:26). A cult of Freyr therefore seems to have been strong among the Svíar in Svíþjóð. On this point the literary and the toponymic evidence are in harmony.

Theophoric place names with the name of the god Óðinn normally occur as *Ons-* or *Odens-*. In my material I have identified approximately seventy names: forty-nine in present-day Sweden, eleven in Norway, and eleven in Denmark. These names have a more even distribution than the Freyr names: they are found more or less in all the major regions of Scandinavia, with the exception, once again, of western Norway. For Sweden the majority of the Óðinn names are again to be found around Lake Mälaren, but names occur all over Götaland down to Skåne in the south; there are also occasional names in northern Sweden, in Dalarna and Jämtland. The distribution of Óðinn names in Denmark is fairly even. The exception is therefore western Norway (see Fig. 2).

¹⁹ *NG*, XVI, 279.

²⁰ Sundqvist, *Freyr's Offspring*, p. 165.

²¹ Sundqvist, *Freyr's Offspring*, p. 165.

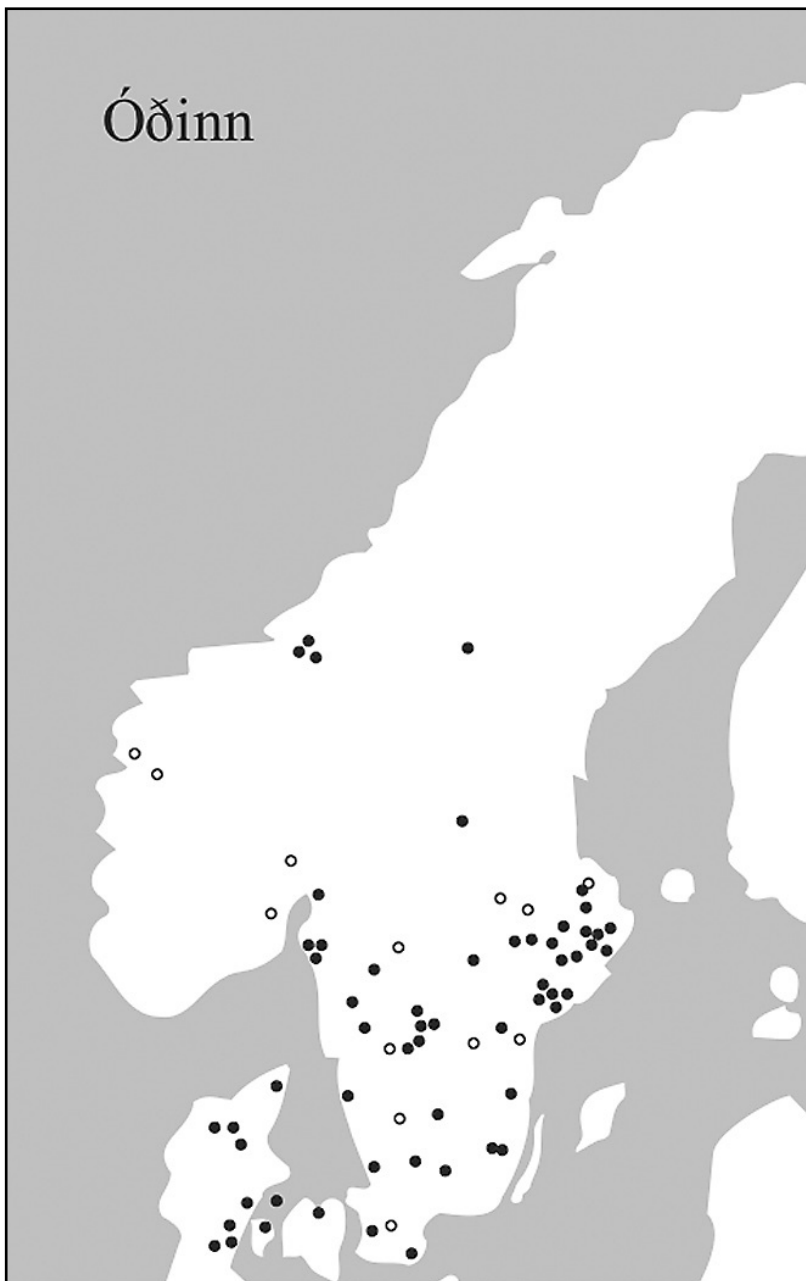


Figure 2. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Óðinn (open circles are uncertain).

Many of the names found in Norway are uncertain to some degree. Most certain are *Onsaker* in Våler, Østfold (*Odensakr RB*); the two, obviously connected, *Onsø* the parish and *Onsø* the hundred in Østfold; and the lost †*Odhinssalr*, very probably to be understood as the predecessor of *Huseby* in Onsø.²² A parallel to the latter name is a lost †*Odhinssalr* in Trøndelag. In Denmark we have a couple of very interesting names, especially three ODa *Othenshyllæ* (*Vonsild*, *Onsild*, *Vonsild*) and five ODa *Othensvæ* (*Oddense*, *Oens*, *Vojens*, *Odense*, *Onsved*), which all seem very secure. In Sweden we again have several fairly certain names, such as *Onsicke* in Hagunda, Uppland (i Odhenseke 1409) and *Odensicke* on Selaön, Södermanland (odhinseke 1365), seven *Odenslund(a)*, five *Odensvi*, etc. It is noteworthy that there are two OSw *Odhenssalr* in Sweden as in Norway, one in Halland (*Onsala*) and one in Jämtland (*Odensala*). The *Odensala* in Ärlinghundra, Uppland should not be counted among these names, since it is a corrupted form of OSw *Opinsharg* ‘the cult site (*hqrgr*) dedicated to Óðinn’. Notable too are the many Óðinn names referring to topographical features, such as lakes, wells, islands, and mountains or hills (*Odensholmen*, *Onsjö*, *Onsberga*, *Odens källa*, *Odens kulle*); an interesting case are names referring to rapids, such as *Odensfors* in Tierp, Uppland, and ?*Odensfors* in Gullberg, Östergötland. Difficult to interpret and assess, however, are the many *Odensland/Onsland* found especially as minor names in Uppland.²³

The god Þórr might perhaps be expected to be well represented in place-name evidence with examples evenly spread all over Scandinavia (see Fig. 3). This is in fact the case, but with some exceptions. Again the majority of the Scandinavian Þórr names are in central eastern Sweden, where the greatest number is to be found in the province of Uppland. Þórr names are scattered thinly but evenly over southern Scandinavia (southern Sweden and Denmark). In Norway we again find the majority of Þórr names around Viken. In western Norway there is an occasional name of rather uncertain background; in Trøndelag these theophoric names are missing altogether. It would come as no surprise if, after closer analysis, western Norway also turned out to lack Þórr names. It is also noticeable that there are regional differences on a smaller scale. So for example western Västergötland, Dalsland, Värmland, western Västmanland, and Närke lack Þórr names; western

²² See Kåre Hoel, ‘Huseby-gardens gamle navn: Huseby-Tesal, Huseby-Odinssal, Huseby-Skiringssal’, in *Institutt for namnegransking: Årsmelding 1985* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 1985), pp. 119–32; Stefan Brink, ‘Husby’, in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd rev. edn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–), xv (2000), 277.

²³ These names will be discussed by Per Vikstrand in a forthcoming article.

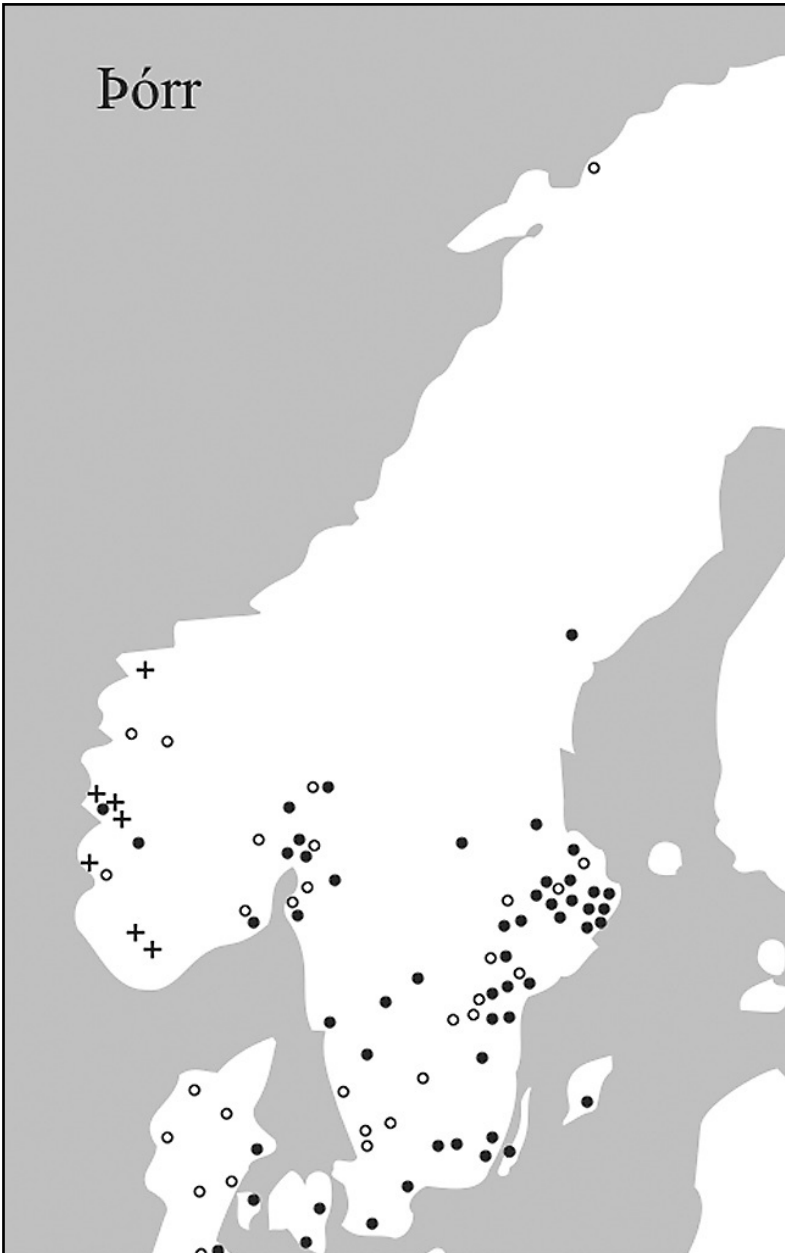


Figure 3. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Þórr (open circles are uncertain), and also the problematic Norwegian *Totland* names (+).

and northern Jutland likewise. The most plentiful occurrences are to be found around Oslo, in Uppland, and in southern Södermanland.

In Norway the majority of the Þórr names are ON *Þórshof*; there are ten in all, all found in the south-east part of Norway (Østfold, Akershus, Buskerud, Hedmark, and Oppland); in addition there are six more or less certain instances of *Þórsnes*. There are some very problematic names, most surviving in the form *Totland*, all found in western Norway (Vest-Agder, Hordaland, and Sogn and Fjordane). The reason for an identification with Þórr is one instance, *Totland* in Alversund, Hordaland (af þorslande c. 1175, þorsland 1427, Thotland 1463, Torsland 1490, Totland 1500s), whose older forms point in the direction of the first element being the god's name Þórr. The other *Totland* cases have only young written forms, and they do not help us very much. The exception is *Totland* in Daviken, Sogn and Fjordane (i Þothlandi BK, Thodlandt 1563), which has an early form with Þoth-, not Þors-. The *Totland* name in Daviken needs to be borne in mind in any discussion of these names, and suggests it would be unwise to assume automatically that all instances of *Totland* are survivals of an older **Thórsland*.

For Sweden, the overwhelmingly most frequent name containing Þórr as an element is *Torslund(a)*, with twelve cases found, nine in Uppland and one each in Södermanland, Östergötland, and Öland. Next most frequent is *Torsåker*, which occurs five times. Several of these have become parish names. Semantically interrelated to *Torsåker* are *Torsång* in Dalarna (< *Thorsvanger*) and *Torsvallen* in Valbo, Gästrikland (< *Thorsvalder*). There is one *Torsvi* in Trögd, Uppland, and a lost †*Thorshugle* in Uppsala, Uppland, where the second element is the word **hugl(e)* ('mound', probably 'grave mound'). We may also note the famous hill fort *Torsburgen* on Gotland and the town name *Torshälla* in Södermanland, which is a corrupt form of *Thorsharg* (in *thorshargi* 1288). In southern Scandinavia there is a *Torseke* in Villand, Skåne, a *Torslunde* on Sjælland and Fyn, and a *Torsager* on Djursland, Jutland.

The place-name evidence makes it clear that in the cult of Þórr, the god cannot have been exclusively a god of the sky. Names such as *Torsåker*, *Torsager*, and *Torsvang* indicate that Þórr must also have been connected to agrarian activities. It has therefore been assumed that Þórr, like Freyr, should be considered a fertility deity in the pagan Scandinavian pantheon. It is clear from the toponymic evidence, at least for central Sweden, that Þórr was one of the most important gods, perhaps the most important, and was connected to agrarian activities, as is indicated in names such as *Thorsakir*. The character of Þórr place names indicates

a very different type of god from the picture we get from Snorri and from Old Norse poetry, as has been noted by several scholars.²⁴

A most elusive god in the pagan Scandinavian pantheon is Ullr, known in Old Norse literature as, *inter alia*, a winter god, although he is not a central figure in Snorri's stories of the gods. The place names containing his name paint a very different picture. One gets the impression that Ullr must have been a major god, but the Ullr names also reveal that the cult of Ullr was never pan-Scandinavian. His occurrence in the toponymic material is confined to two distinct regions: the provinces around Lake Mälaren, including central parts of Östergötland, and the area around Viken, principally restricted to Østfold, Vestfold, and Akershus. Even more interestingly, we have some indisputable Norwegian place-name evidence of what has been assumed to be a by-name for Ullr, namely Ullinn.²⁵ Trøndelag totally lacks names in Ullr or Ullinn; nor do southern Sweden or Denmark have any trace of Ullr. The southernmost Ullr name is *Ullevi* in Gårdby on Öland, a name typical for the Mälär provinces and found in an area that was clearly Svea dominated, the south-east coast of Sweden, including Öland and Gotland (see Fig. 4).

Among the twenty-seven Norwegian names containing Ullr, some are 'uncertain', such as *Ullreng* in Skedsmo, Akershus (Vllereñgh *RB*) — one would not expect a god's name in a place name with *-engh* 'meadow' as the second element — and as many as eight instances of *Ull(e)land*. More certain are *Ullevål* in Oslo (a Ullaruale 1309), †*Ullarål*, an old name for a part of Haug parish on the west side of Randselven in Norderhov, Buskerud (i Vllærrale 1355), and a couple of places named **Ullarvin*, such as *Ulleren* in Oslo (i Ullarini *RB*), *Ulleren* in southern Odalen, Hedmark (Ullerni *RB*), *Ulleren* in Hole, Buskerud (Ullaryn 1291), and *Ulleren* in eastern Eiker, Buskerud (a Ullaryn 1445). There are several names for topographical features, such as inlets, lakes, islands, and peninsulas, containing the god Ullr's name, as well as, and perhaps rather remarkably, a couple of names in *-fveit* 'minor field, clearing'.

²⁴ See for example Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*, pp. 162–64, and references there.

²⁵ The pair Ullr/Ullinn looks like an identical construction to Óðr/Óðinn, but as, for example, Magnus Olsen has pointed out (*Hedenske kultminder*, p. 104), if Ullinn was to be derived with the same suffix as Óðinn (< Pr.-Germ. *Wōdanaz) one would expect a form *Ollinn, not Ullinn. Instead Olsen deduces an older Pr.-Germ. *Wulðīnaz for Ullinn, with an adjectival suffix *-ina* 'belonging to, part of'. It is easier perhaps to look upon Ullinn as a derivative parallel to the variant form of the god Óðinn that we find in OE Wōden and OSax Wōdin < Pr.-Germ. *Wōðinaz (de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, II, 416), hence a Pr.-Germ. *Wulðīnaz; in this way a parallel between Ullr/Ullinn and Óðr/Óðinn may be maintained.

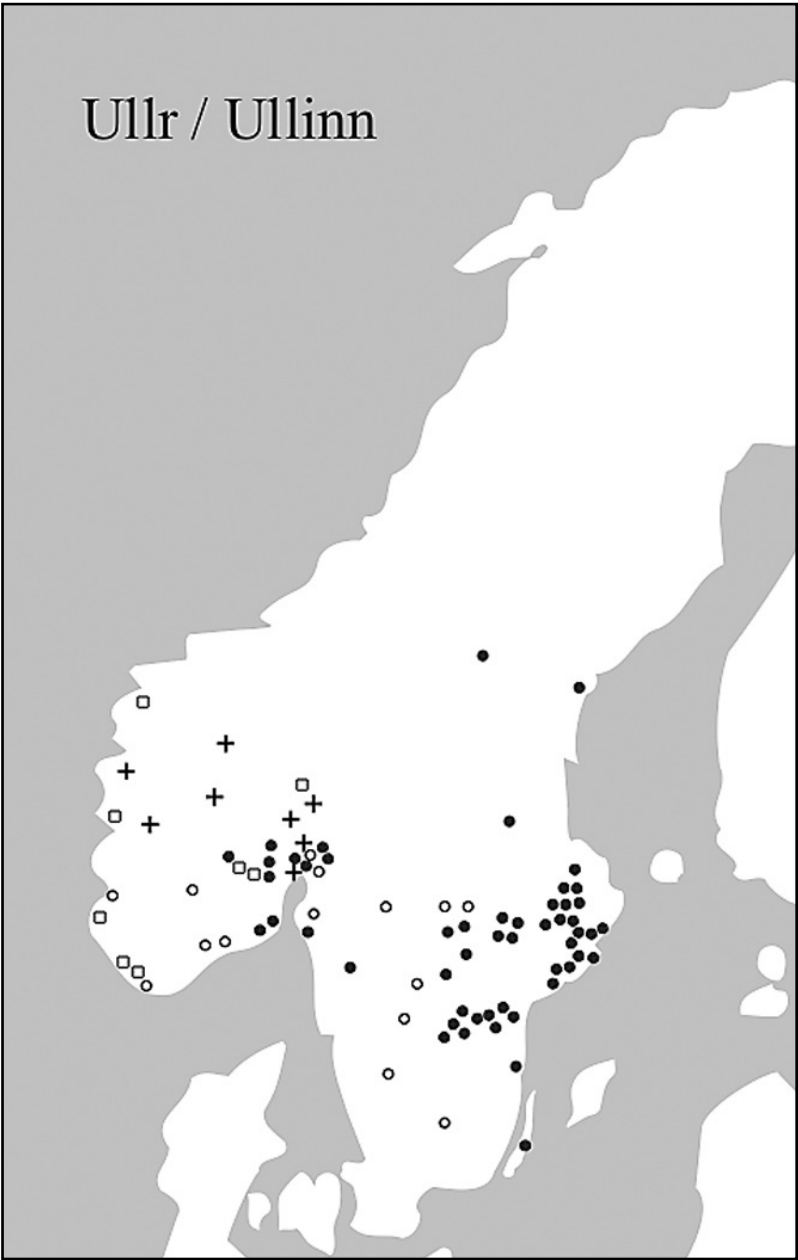


Figure 4. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the gods Ullr (●) and *Ullinn (+) (open circles are uncertain); also the even more problematic Norwegian *Ull(e)land* names (open square).

For Sweden we have an astonishing twenty-three instances of *Ullevi*, making Ullr the god by far the most frequently connected to a *vi* ('pagan cult site'). There are five *Ullunda*, two *Ulleråker*, and one *Ultuna*, the latter a farm or a chieftain's 'manor' in the district called *Ulleråker* in Uppsala, Uppland. As in Norway we also have a couple of instances of *Ullarvin*. There are also some elusive names, such as *Ullbolsta*, a parish district in Ulleråkers hundred district, Uppland (de vllabolstad 1316), *Ulbersta*, a parish district and a hundred district in Skärkind, Östergötland (af vllabolstaþ 1367, af vllabolstadh 1371, j vllaboolstadhe 1375), *Ullstämma* in Trögd's hundred district, Uppland (i Vllastempne 1419), *Ullstämma* in Landeryd's parish district, Hanekind's hundred district, Östergötland (vllastempnu 1317), and *Ullekalv* in Högby parish district, in Göstring's hundred district, Östergötland (vllacalf 1337, i vllakalfwe 1384), which seems to contain the god's name, but how these names are to be interpreted is a matter of debate.²⁶

In Norway we seem to have place-name evidence for the cult of the god ON Njǫrðr, and in Sweden evidence of the cult of the goddess *Nierþer, and not the other way around. This strange circumstance is probably an artefact of the early history of research into these names.²⁷ In Norway the names were connected early on with the god Njǫrðr mentioned in Old Norse literature, whereas in Sweden the names beginning in *N(i)ærdh-* were instead connected to the goddess Nerthus, mentioned by Tacitus in his *Germania*. No one has yet tried to reconcile this discrepancy, which is undoubtedly illusory. According to Magnus Olsen there are around a dozen place names in Norway containing the name of the god Njǫrðr.²⁸ The most certain of these are the two *Norderhov*, in Løiten, Hedmark (a Nærdrhofue 1370) and in Ringerike, Buskerud (Nierdarhofs sokn RB). Then in addition we have five instances of *Njarðarheimr* and four of *Njarðarland*. These names are found all over southern Norway, but not in Trøndelag, Nordland, or Troms.

For Sweden, Per Vikstrand reckons up sixteen place names with *Nierþer: five *Närlunda*, five *Nierdhavi*, three *Nälberg(a)*, and the island name *Norderön*.²⁹ Of particular interest is *Nälsta* in Spånga, Stockholm (nærthastaff 1354), as it is an OSw form of *Nierdhastaf*; the same may be the case for *Nällsta* on Selaön in

²⁶ For a discussion of these names, see Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*, passim.

²⁷ See Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*, pp. 101–02; Anders Hultgård, 'Njǫrðr', in *Reallexikon*, ed. by Beck and others, XXI (2002), 234–40; and Thorsten Andersson, 'Theophore Namen', in *ibid.*, xxx (2005), 444.

²⁸ *Hedenske kultminder*, pp. 50–56.

²⁹ *Gudarnas platser*, p. 98.

Södermanland (nerddestum 1334, nærdistom 1411), and these names probably denoted some kind of standing idol connected to *Niærþer. The distribution of the Njård-names in Sweden is distinct and regional. These names occur in central eastern Sweden, with the sole exception of *Norderön* in Jämtland. Denmark has only a few uncertain names that may contain the name of the god/goddess Niærth: one is *Nærum* close to Copenhagen on Sjælland (Niærtharum 1186); two others are the two *Nærå* on Fyn, which, according to John Kousgård Sørensen is a corruption of *Niærtharhøgh*.³⁰

The geographical distribution of the god Týr (< Pr.-Germ. *Tīwaz, cf. Lat. *deus*) in Scandinavian place names is highly uneven. Sweden has no examples of this god's name in any place name to my knowledge. It was assumed in earlier scholarship that the name of the large forest that divides the provinces of Västergötland and Närke, *Tiveden* (< *Tīviþer*), had the god's name as the first element, but this is impossible. Instead it may very well contain the related word ON plur. *tívar* 'gods', giving the meaning 'the forest where gods and deities dwell'. In Norway there is one place name containing Týr that has never been disputed, namely *Tysnes* (Tysnes 1330, Tysnæss *BK*), a parish and hundred on the island ON *Njarðarlög* in Hordaland.³¹ The other place name discussed in this connection is *Tislauan* in Melhus, Southern Trøndelag (Tisle NRJ, Tislagh, Tyslag 1559). Since we do not have any medieval forms of this name, it is very difficult to draw definite conclusions, but it is clearly possible that this name contains the name of the god Týr. The traditional interpretation is that the name is an ON *Týslög*, hence a parallel to *Njarðarlög*, with a meaning 'the legal district dedicated to the god Týr',³² and this possibility must be considered. A third Norwegian name is the lost †*Tésal(i)r* in Råde, Østfold (Tesala kirke *RB*, i Tesale 1403). No one has seriously proposed seeing the name of the god Týr in the first element in this name: the older form's *Te-* is an insurmountable obstacle. The first element in this name is utterly elusive. The original and brave scholar Magnus Olsen had a suggestion of course.³³ *Té-* in *Tésal(i)r* is, in his opinion, the name of another god **Tér* (< **Tewa-*) closely related to Týr (< **Tiwa-*). Although he adduces some linguistic parallels in Sanskrit and Old Greek, this suggestion must be considered a philological shot in the dark. To sum up, in Norway we have one, perhaps two place names indicating the cult of the god Týr.

³⁰ 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Südschwedens', p. 235.

³¹ *NG*, XI, 171.

³² *NG*, XIV, 279.

³³ Olsen, *Hedenske kultminder*, p. 231.

In Denmark the picture is totally different. Here we have at least thirty-three place names that could potentially have the name of the god Týr as the first element.³⁴ There are six *Tislund*, three *Tiset* (< *Tisvith*), four *Tisbjerg*, and three *Tishøj*. The most well-known name is probably *Tissø* on Sjælland (Tisøe 1452), with a couple of parallels denoting a small lake which must have been dedicated to the god. *Tissø* has become one of the most important sites for understanding Viking-Age society in Scandinavia, thanks to the extensive archaeological excavations there.³⁵ There can be no doubt that the cult of the god Týr, connected to war and legal matters, was extensive in Denmark. It is however notable that Týr names are lacking in Fyn, Langeland, Lolland, and Falster, making a strange lacuna in the distribution in the middle of Denmark (see Fig. 5).

These are the gods and goddesses that we find in the Scandinavian place-name corpus (with the exception of Freyja, which I have not discussed). There are a few place names which have been assumed to contain the names of other gods and goddesses known from Old Norse literature, such as Baldr, Forseti, Víðarr, Frigg, and the otherwise unknown *Fillinn.

The name of the god Baldr is evidently nonexistent in Swedish place names, but has been assumed in a couple of Danish and Norwegian place names. The Danish ones, *Baldersbæk* and *Bollesager*, are not conclusive, with only the former as a strong candidate in my opinion. Among the few Norwegian names in contention, only *Balleshol* in Nes, Hedmark (a Balldrshole 1356, but a Baldissøle 1358) and *Balsnes* in Fillan, Nordmøre (Balldrnes 1342, af Baldaznese AB, Bollisnes 1559) warrant serious consideration; even more uncertain is *Basberg* in Sem, Vestfold (j Baldzbergi RB, Baldraasberg (1320) 1409).³⁶ Unfortunately the older forms vary considerably, and it is not obvious that the names have Baldrs- as the first element. To conclude, there may be a few names in Denmark and Norway

³⁴ See Bente Holmberg, 'Den hedenske gud Tyr i danske stednavne', in *Mange bække små: Til John Kousgård Sørensen på tresårsdagen 6.12.1985*, ed. by V. Dalberg and Gillian Fellows-Jensen, Navnestudier udg. af Institut for Naavneforskning, 27 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1986), pp. 109–27.

³⁵ See for example Lars Jørgensen, 'En storgård fra vikingetid ved Tissø, Sjælland: En foreløbig præsentation', in *Centrala platser, centrala frågor: Samhällsstrukturen under järnåldern. En vänbok till Berta Stjernquist*, ed. by L. Larsson and B. Hårdh, Uppåkrastudier, 1 (Lund: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), pp. 233–48, and 'Kongsgård, kultsted, marked: overvejelser omkring Tissø-kompleksets struktur og funktion', in *Vägar till Midgård*, vol. II: *Plats och praxis: Arkeologiska och religionshistoriska studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*, ed. by Kristina Jennbert, Anders Andrén, and Catharina Raudvere (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002), pp. 215–47.

³⁶ Compare Botolv Helleland, 'Sosiale og sakrale uttrykk i stadnamn: Freistnad på ei tematisering', in *Ortnamn i språk och samhälle*, ed. by Strandberg, pp. 125–42 (p. 131).

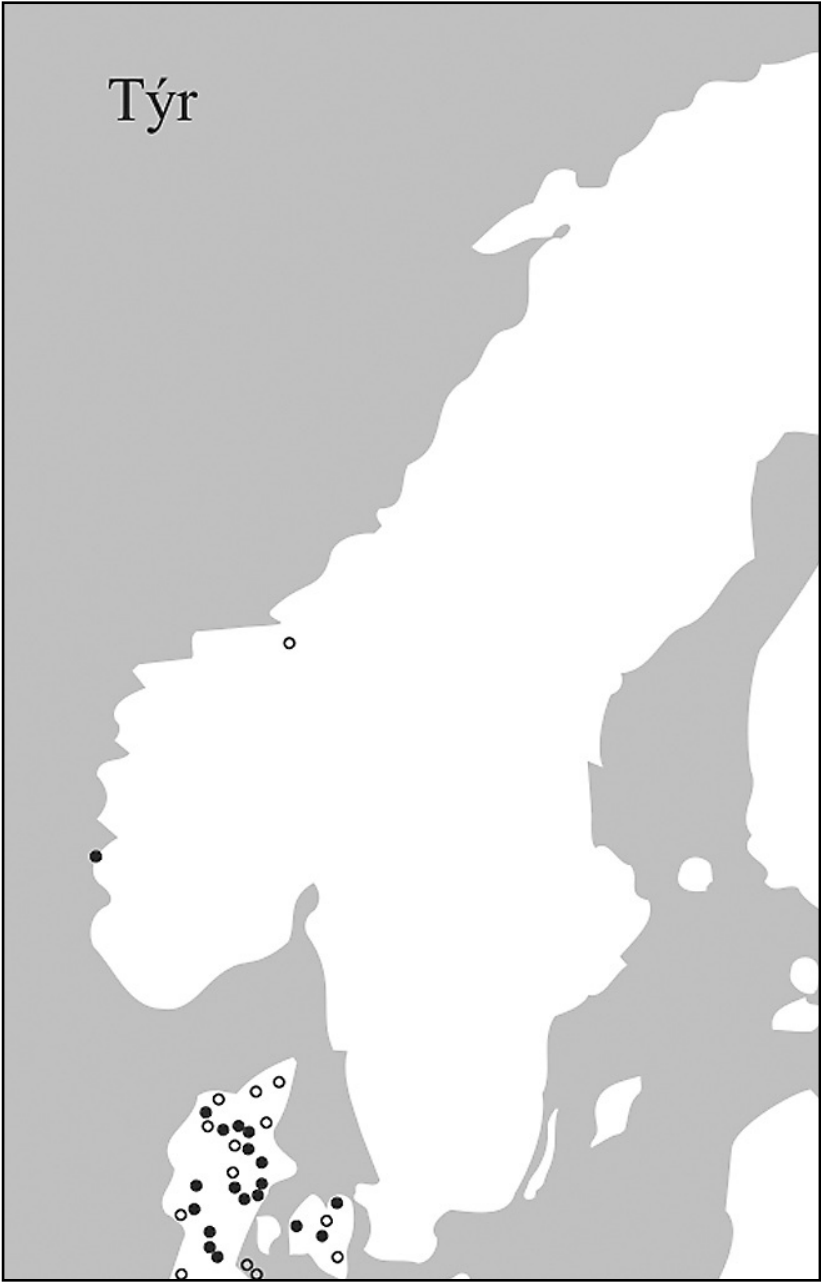


Figure 5. The distribution of theophoric place names in Scandinavia containing the name of the god Týr (open circles are uncertain).

indicating the existence of a cult of the god Baldr, but the evidence is fragile and inconclusive.

The lost farm *Forsetlund* in Onsø, Østfold, Norway (i Fosættelundi *RB*, Forsettelund 1480) has a very interesting name in an intriguing local context, as it is, along with †*Odhinssalr*, in Onsø (< Óðinsøy), a district with rich evidence of pagan cult. It has been assumed, with good reason, that the first element of this name is the name of the god Forseti, hence the name was ON *Forsetalundr*.³⁷ Older forms of the name support such an interpretation. If this is correct, this name is the only evidence in the Scandinavian place-name material — to my knowledge — of a cult of the god Forseti. This elusive god is mentioned by Snorri as Baldr's son, and in *Grímnismál* 15 he is said to reside in Glitnir, a hall made of gold and silver, where he sits and mediates in legal disputes. The legal aspect of this god is also referred to in his name, which means 'one who leads a legal meeting, a thing'.³⁸

In and around the parish of *Vang* — the old *Riðabu* in Hedmark (east of Lake Mjøsa) — we have what is for Norway a unique 'sacral landscape', judging by the place names: *Disen*, *Åker*, *Vang*, *Torshov*, and *Vidarshov*. This place-name milieu has been observed and discussed for a long time. Unfortunately the evidence is not as clear as it appears from the present-day forms. The name *Vidarshov* has been understood as an ON *Vidarshof*, evidencing the cult of Víðarr, the son Óðinn begot with the giantess Gríðr, killer of his father's killer at Ragnarøk. The older forms of this place name are, unfortunately, not all that old — no medieval forms are known: Wirishaugh c. 1550, Wiersøgh 1578, Virso 1574–97. From this it seems rather adventurous (to put it mildly) to reconstruct an ON *Vidarshof*. Instead the name seems to be an older ON *Virishaugr*, containing a man's name *Virir, or perhaps Virfir, known from *Vqluspá*, and *haugr* ('grave mound'). Such a name has at least a few Swedish parallels, with a man's name as the first element and the word OSw *høgher* 'burial mound' as the second, often referring to a grand grave mound, for example *Hillessjö* (< Hildishøgh 1310) in Uppland referring to the grave mound *Hilleshögen*.³⁹ The usual explanation of the name *Torshov* is also questionable. Older forms of the name, such as Torseg 1520 and Torsogh 1578, 1593, actually point in the same direction as *Vidarshov*, to an ON *Þórshaugr* or *Þórishaugr*, the latter containing the man's name Þórir. Although there are

³⁷ Mattias Tveitane, 'Forseti', in *Reallexikon*, ed. by Beck and others, IX (1995), 343–45.

³⁸ Compare the title of Iceland's president, 'Forseti' Íslands.

³⁹ Karin Callissendorff, *Ortnamn i Uppland* (Stockholm: AWE/Geber, 1986), p. 34.

parallels to the first element being a man's name, one cannot rule out the possibility that we have here the names of the gods Þórr and Víðarr, while the second element in both names looks like *-haugr* 'burial mound'. It is impossible to be certain in either case, due to the lack of old (medieval) forms of the names.

The goddess Frigg, Óðinn's wife according to the *Poetic Edda* and to Snorri, does not occur very frequently in Old Norse literature, and the same is true for the toponymic material: we only have knowledge of her cult in a couple of place names. These are *Friggeråker*, a parish and hamlet in Gudhem, in the district of Falbygden, famous for its ancient monuments, in Västergötland (de frigiær aker, in frigiæraker 1311, in friggjaraker 1323, i frigerachar 1390, i friggerakers sokn 1423); and the lost farm name †*Friggjarsetr* in Hegra, northern Trøndelag, Norway (af Fryggiosætre AB). The Swedish name has normally been seen as a definite instance of the name of the goddess Frigg. The earlier name forms correspond well with the expected *Friggiar-*, and the second element of the compound, the word *aker* ('arable land'), gives the place name a main element that is semantically plausible. However, since this may be a unique case, Lennart Elmevik has presented a non-theophoric interpretation.⁴⁰ He sees the word ON *fridgerð* ('making peace, conciliation') in the first element of the name. The name has, in his opinion, gone through the following development: **Fridgerð(ar)aker* > **Fridgiærðaker* > **Frigger(ð)aker*. The etymological handicraft looks possible, but one has to admit there are many more or less problematic links in this chain of evidence. Personally I accept the traditional interpretation and see *Friggeråker* as an example of a name evidencing a cult of the goddess Frigg. More problematic is the Norwegian name. Magnus Olsen reconstructs a **Friggjarsetr* from the forms in Aslak Bolt's land register (1430s–40s),⁴¹ but this is not at all obvious from the preserved form *Fryggiosætre*. Instead the name looks to me like an ON **Friggjusetr*, indicating a woman's name **Friggja*, or perhaps an otherwise unknown weak variant of the goddess name Frigg. The Norwegian name is problematic and a connection with the name of the goddess Frigg can certainly not be taken for granted.

Finally we have the interesting case of the god(?) **Fillinn*. In the central part of the settlement district of Våge in Gudbrandsdalen, Oppland, Norway, we have three *vin*-farms in a row: *Ullinsyn*, which also is the vicarage in the parish (a Vllinsin 1354, a Vllinsini 1356), *Lyen* (i Lygin 1345, i Lyghine 1360, a Lyghini 1361), and *Fillinsø* (a Fillinsin 1325, a Fillensœæ 1446): there are hence three

⁴⁰ Lennart Elmevik, 'Härnevi och Friggeråker', *Namn och bygd*, 83 (1995), 67–77.

⁴¹ Olsen, *Hedenske kultminder*, p. 207.

related names, ON *Ullinsin*, *Lýgin*, and *Fillinsin*, which could be parts of an original, subsequently divided **Vin*. Magnus Olsen, who first drew attention to these names, considered that one of them, *Ullinsin*, must be a *vin*-name containing the name of the god Ullinn.⁴² There can be no doubt that he is right. *Lýgin* seems to have as the first element a stem **lýgi-*, with a parallel stem in **ljúg-*, found, for example, in Goth *liuga* f. ‘marriage’ and OHG **liugi* ‘peace, agreement’ (in *urliugi* ‘war’; cf. with ablaut OSw *ørlog*, MLG *orloge*, *orlich*, MFr *orloge* ‘war’). It is Olsen’s plausible idea that an Old Norse form **lýgi* n. once existed, meaning ‘final agreement, pact’, with a topographical denotation ‘a place which has become sacred and not possible to violate by oath-taking’, hence ‘a thing site’. Several names in Norway contain the stems **lýgi-* and **ljúg-*, such as *Lye*, a vicarage in the parish of the same name in Time, Rogaland (a Lyghi 1384), and three instances of *Lystad*, in Skiptvet, Østfold (i Lyghistadhum *RB*), in Sørums, Akershus (Lygistað *RB*), and in Ullensaker, Akershus (Lysistað *RB*). In the name *Fillinsø*, ON *Fillinsin*, Olsen sees a toponymic compound parallel to ON *Ullinsin*, so that the first elements in both names are the names of gods: **Ullinn* and **Fillinn*. Neither appears in Old Norse literature, only in place names, but at least for Ullinn, the evidence seems plausible and has never been questioned. The reconstructed **Fillinn* is in Olsen’s opinion from a Pr.-Germ. **Filpinaz*, related to Pr.-Germ. **felpa-* ‘arable land’, and he considered the god to be a hypostasis of Freyr. In support of this assumption Olsen points to the probably related name pair *Ullinsakr*/*Frøysakr* in N. Land, Opland, and to the Finnish god Pellonpekko. To cut a long story short, Magnus Olsen has drawn attention to a most interesting case in Våge, and our conclusion must be that his interpretation of the element **Ullinn* in ON *Ullinsin* is a cogent one; the derivation of **lýgi* ‘thing site’ in *Lyen*, ON *Lýgin*, is clever, potentially possible, and extremely interesting; and as for **Fillinn* in *Fillinsø*, ON *Fillinsin*, this remains a bold, intriguing, and well-argued case, albeit highly speculative.

Conclusion

This spatial and toponymical exercise has revealed that the existence of cults of many gods and goddesses, as suggested by Old Norse literature, is not supported by the toponymic material. According to place-name evidence, only a few gods and even fewer goddesses were the objects of an actual cult in Scandinavia: Óðinn,

⁴² Olsen, *Hedenske kultminder*, pp. 103–30.

Þórr, Freyr, Ullr/Ullinn, Njǫrðr/*Niærþer, Týr, and probably Freyja. There are some isolated indications of a cult of Baldr, Forseti, and Frigg. The evidence presented here does not indicate that there was an actual cult of all of the gods and goddesses in the pantheon mentioned in *Snorra Edda*, the *Poetic Edda*, skaldic poetry, and by Saxo.

The other finding of my analysis of the place-name material is that different cults seem to have been distinctly regional in many cases. Óðinn is found all over Sweden and Denmark, around Viken and in Trøndelag in Norway, but strangely enough never in south-western Norway. Þórr had a cult in Sweden, Denmark, and in south-east Norway, but place names formed using Þórr's name are lacking in Trøndelag and northern Norway and the ones found in western Norway are uncertain. Freyr had a distinct cult in the Svea-dominated area, with a core around Lake Mälaren; in Norway we find Freyr names in the south-eastern region, in Østfold, Vestfold, Hedmark, Buskerud, and Opland. Again there are no names in Trøndelag and northern Norway, and the ones in western Norway are of uncertain origin. Denmark lacks Freyr names altogether, except for Frøs Herred on Jutland. Ullr has a similar spread to the cult of Freyr, with two distinct areas, the Svea region in eastern Sweden and the Viken region in Norway, whereas Trøndelag has no names and western Norway has some uncertain ones. Denmark has no evidence of a cult of Ullr. A regional cult of Ullinn is demonstrable for the central and western areas of Norway, and only there. Týr was obviously an important god in Denmark — probably the most important — according to the place names there. His name does not occur in Swedish place names. In Norway we find Týr names in western Norway and possibly in Trøndelag.

This is a strong indication that the pagan 'religion' in early Scandinavia was never homogeneous. There were obviously regional cults of certain gods and goddesses. Ullr and Freyr had a distinct regional cult in the Svea-dominated area in Sweden and around Viken in Norway. The cult of Ullinn was a local cult in central Norway. What is striking is that western Norway seems to have been distinctive; it differs considerably from the Viken region, for example. Here gods such as Þórr, Óðinn, and Freyr were not worshipped; instead there are indications of cults of Njǫrðr and Týr in this region. In Denmark the cult of Týr seems to have been particularly strong, with many place names bearing his name. Gods and goddesses such as Loki, Heimdallr, Bragi, Gefjon, and Iðunn never occur in Scandinavian place names, which may indicate that there was never an actual cult of these deities.

Appendix

*Theophoric Place Names in Scandinavia*⁴³

Freyr

Norway

1. Frøshov, Trøgstad hd, Østfold (Frøeyshof 1391)
2. ?Fresvold, S. Odalen hd, Hedmark (Frøsuælli *RB*)
3. ?Frøise, Lom hd, Oppland (Frøso 1520)
4. Frøisen, Ø. Gausdal hd, Oppland (Frøysynar 1329, a Frøsene 1459)
5. ?Frøisli, Lunner hd, Oppland (Frøssliidt 1520)
6. †Frøisli, N. Land hd, Oppland (Frøsl 1669)
7. †Frøysland, N. Land hd, Oppland (Frøsslanndt 1592)
8. †Frøysåker, N. Land, Oppland (Frøssagger 1592)
9. Frøishov, Hole hd, Buskerud (a Frøeyshofue 1342)
10. Frøisåker, Gol hd, Buskerud (Frøisaack 1500s)
11. ?Freste, Ramnes hd, Vestfold (i Frøysteigi *RB*)
12. ?Fresti, Sem hd, Vestfold (a Frøysteighi *RB*)
13. Frostvet, Hedrum hd, Vestfold (Frøyspueit *RB*)
14. ?Frøisnes, Bygland hd, Aust-Agder (Frøissnnes 1601)
15. ?Frøisland, Søgne hd, Vest-Agder (Frøi landt 1601, Frøsseland 1610)
16. ?Frøisti, Vanse hd, Vest-Agder (Frøsthienn 1594)
17. ?Frøsvik, Ullensvang hd, Hordaland (Frysuig 1500s)
18. Fretland, Sogndal hd, Sogn og Fjordane (i Frøyslandi *BK*)
19. Fresvik, Leikanger hd, Sogn og Fjordane (i Frøysvik 1317)
20. ?Frøisland, Førde hd, Sogn og Fjordane (Frøessland 1608)
21. ?Frøise, Stranda hd, Møre (af Frøysin *AB*)
22. ?Frøiset, Veø, Møre (Frøsetter 1500s)

Sweden

1. †Fröshögarna, Uppsala, Uppland (fröshögana 1497)
2. Fröslunda, sn, Lagunda hd, Uppland (De fröslundum 1314)
3. Frösvi, Tillinge sn, Åsunda hd, Uppland (j frösvi 1467)

⁴³ Analysed and selected from the medieval register 'Medeltidsregistret' at SOFI, Uppsala; Olsen, *Hedenske kultminder*; Kousgård Sørensen, 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Südschandinaviens'; Elias Wessén, 'Forntida gudsdyrkan i Östergötland 1–2', *Meddelanden från Östergötlands fornminnes- och museiförening* (1921), 85–147, (1922), 1–48; Elias Wessén, *Minnen av forntida gudsdyrkan i Mellan-Sveriges ortnamn*, Studier i nordisk filologi, 14.1 (Helsinki: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland, 1923); Elias Wessén, *Studier till Sveriges hedna mytologi och fornhistoria*, Uppsala universitets årsskrift, 1924: Filosofi, språkvetenskap och historiska vetenskaper, 6 (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1924); Hellberg, 'Hedendomens spår'; Holmberg, 'Den hedenske gud Tyr'; and Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*.

4. Frösthult, sn, Simtuna hd, Uppland (De fröstolpt 1314)
5. Fröslunda, Altuna sn, Simtuna hd, Uppland (ij fröslundum 1356)
6. ?Frösvik, Ö. Ryds sn, Danderyds skl, Uppland (Frösvik 1369, j fridzwik 1424)
7. Frösåker, hd, Uppland (in frösakir 1344)
8. Fröslunda, Harakers sn, Norrbo hd, Västmanland (fröslundir, Fröslundum 1288)
9. ?†Frösboberg, Västerås, Västmanland (in Frösbobergh 1357)
10. Frösshammar, Arboga lfs., Åkerbo hd, Västmanland (fröshamar 1291)
11. Frössvi, Kolbäcks sn, Snevringe hd, Västmanland (in frösswi 1331)
12. Frösvi, Romfartuna sn, Norrbo hd, Västmanland (in fröswj 1357)
13. Frösåker, Kärbo sn, Siende hd, Västmanland (frösaker 1291)
14. Frösvi, Edsbergs sn and hd, Närke (fruoswi 1216, de frösui 1341)
15. Frösvidal, Kils sn, Närke (i Fröswi 1438)
16. Fröslunda, Överselö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (i frayslutum Sö 208, fröslunda 1314)
17. Kilfröslunda, Överselö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland⁴⁴
18. Fröslunda, Fors sn, Eskilstuna, Södermanland (in fröslundum 1346)
19. Frustuna, sn, Daga hd, Södermanland (fröstuna 1331)
20. Frösvi, Österåkers sn, Oppunda hd, Södermanland (j frösui 1397)
21. Frössle, Kärna sn, Hanekinds hd, Östergötland (ffröshella 1435)
22. Fröslunda, Bankekinds sn and hd, Östergötland (in fröslundum 1337)
23. Frösvik, Oppeby sn, Kinda hd, Östergötland (fröswy 1307)
24. ?Fröstad, Rystads sn, Åkerbo hd, Östergötland (in Fröpstadhum 1354, in Fröstathum 1354)
25. ?Fröstad, part of Östra Tollstads sn, Vifolka hd, Östergötland (frösta 1530)
26. Fröseke, Älghults sn, Uppvidinge hd, Småland (i Fröseke 1404)
27. ?Fröset, Fröderyds sn, Västra hd, Småland (frösryth 1296)
28. ?Fröset, Hångers sn, Östbo hd, Småland (j frösidh 1494, frösseriith 1538)
29. Fröslunda, Stenåsa sn, Möckelby hd, Öland (in fröslundum 1312)
30. Frösve, sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (Frösvi 1397)
31. Fröslunda, Sunnersbergs sn, Kållands hd, Västergötland (fröslwnde 1470s)
32. †Fröslunda, Kåkindes hd, Västergötland (i fröslwnda 1494)
33. Fredsberg, sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (frösbiærg 1279, frösbyergh 1279)
34. Fröslöv, Valleberga sn, Ingelstads hd, Skåne (i Frösløff 1477, Frösløff 1491)
35. Frösten, Jättendals sn, Hälsingland (fröstena 1483, frosstuna 1542)
36. ?Fröst, Alnö sn, Sundsvall, Medelpad (i ffrössetther 1535)
37. Fröstland, Bjärträ sn, Ångermanland (i fröslunda 1500, i fröslund 1519)
38. Frösö, island and sn, Jämtland (De frösø 1314)

Denmark

1. Frøs Herred, hd, Jylland (Frøsheret 1231)

⁴⁴ It is very difficult to determine which *Fröslunda* in Överselä parish (*Fröslunda* or *Kilfröslunda*) older forms in medieval documents are to be identified with.

Njorðr/*Niærþer

Norway

1. Nerdrum, Fet hd, Akershus (i Niærdarini 1363)
2. Norderhov, Løiten hd, Hedmark (a Nærdrhofue 1370)
3. Norderhov, sn and hd, Buskerud (ON Njarðarhof; *NSL* p. 234)
4. Nærland, Nærbø hd, Rogaland (Nordelandh c. 1520)
5. Nærland, Finnø hd, Rogaland (Niærdaland 1308)
6. Nørland, Masfjorden hd, Hordaland (Nerdelandt c. 1520)
7. Nerland, Eresfjord, Nesset hd, Møre (Nordlandæ sokn *AB*)
8. ?Nardo, Strinda hd, S.Trøndelag (i Nirdole *AB*)
9. Nærum, Rygge hd, Østfold (af Nerdheimum 1320)
10. Nalum, Brunlanes hd, Vestfold (Næiardheim *RB*)
11. Næreim, Suldal, Rogaland (Nerenn, Nerem 1567, Nerrimb 1602, Nerim 1610)
12. Nereim, Fjelberg hd, Hordaland (Niardhæims sokn 1326)
13. Nærem, Sylte hd, Møre (af Nerdheime *AB*)

*Sweden*⁴⁵

1. Norderön, sn, Jämtland
2. Närtuna, sn, Långhundra hd, Uppland
3. Nälsta, Spånga sn, Sollentuna hd, Uppland
4. Närlunda, Ekerö sn, Färentuna hd, Uppland
5. Närlunda, Badelunda sn, Siende hd, Västmanland
6. Närlunda, Gåsinge sn, Daga hd, Södermanland
7. Närlunda, Husby-Oppunda sn, Oppunda hd, Södermanland
8. Nälberga, Tystberga sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland
9. Nälberga, Svärta sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland
10. Nalavi, Kräcklinge sn, Hardemo hd, Närke
11. Nälberg, Hardemo sn and hd, Närke
12. †N(i)ærdarvi, Viby sn, Grimstens hd, Närke
13. Närlunda, Bällefors sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland
14. N(i)ærdhavi (Närby), Drothems sn, Hammarkinds hd, Östergötland
15. Mjärdevi, Slaka sn, Hanekinds hd, Östergötland
16. Mjärdevi, Hogstads sn, Göstrings hd, Östergötland
17. ?Nällsta, Ytterselö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (nerddestum 1334, nærdistom 1411)

*Denmark*⁴⁶

1. Nærum, Copenhagen, Sjælland (Niartharum 1186)
2. Nærå, N., Fyn
3. Nærå, S., Fyn

⁴⁵ See Vikstrand, *Gudarnas platser*, p. 98, supplement with Nällsta.

⁴⁶ See Kousgård Sørensen, 'Haupttypen sakraler Ortsnamen Südschandinaviens'.

Óðinn

Norway

1. Onsåker, Våler hd, Østfold (Odensakr *RB*)
2. Onsø, hd, Østfold (ON Óðinsøy, see *NG*, I, 309)
3. †Óðinssalr, Onsø hd, Østfold (óðinssalri *Fagrskinna*)
4. Onsrud, Ullensaker hd, Akershus (a Odenshofue 1331, a Odenshofue *RB*)
5. ?Onsaker, Gran hd, Oppland (Onsager 1667)
6. ?Onsåker, Hole hd, Buskerud (Onsagger 1578)
7. ?Osland, Kirkebø hd, Sogn og Fjordane (a Odenslande 1322)
8. ?Osland, Kinn hd, Sogn og Fjordane (i Odenalande *BK*, Odhenslandh 1500s)
9. Onsöien, Buviken hd, S. Trøndelag (af Odinsyn *AB*, Odhensøy *AB*)
10. Onsöien, Byneset hd, S. Trøndelag (Orthensø 1500s)
11. †Óðinssalr, Beitstad hd, N. Trøndelag (see *NSL* p. 240)

Sweden

1. Onsicke, Skogs-Tibble sn, Hagunda hd, Uppland (i Odhenseke 1409)
2. Odensfors/Onskarby, Tierp, Uppland (Odensfors 1480/odenskarlabý 1486)
3. †Onsta, Tierp, Uppland (odenstatt, odenstat 1500s)
4. Onslunda, Tensta sn, Norunda hd, Uppland (apud villam Odinslunde 1302)
5. Odenslund, Söderby-Karls sn, Lyhundra hd, Uppland (j odhenslunde 1365)
6. Odenslunda, Fresta sn, Vallentuna hd, Uppland (de Ødhinslundum 1351, j Odhenslundum 1409)
7. †Odensholmen, ?Östra Ryds sn, Danderyds skl, Uppland (in öpinsholmi 1315)
8. Odensholmen, Skånela sn, Seminghundra hd, Uppland (odens hálma 1634)
9. Odensala, sn, Ärlinghundra hd, Uppland (othinsharg 1286, othinsaerg 1288, othinshargh 1291, in odhinshargh 1310)
10. †Odinssalir, Sala sn, Övertjurbo hd, Västmanland (Onsals backar 1785)
11. †Odensvi, sn, Åkerbo hd, Västmanland (Odhienwi 1351, j öpinswj 1366)
12. Onsholmen, Irsta sn, Siende hd, Västmanland (odensholm 1449)
13. ?Onsjö, Fagersta, Västmanland (onsøø 1486, Onssyö 1539)
14. †Odensö, probably in Munktorps sn, Snevringe hd, Västmanland (aff odizisøø, i odinzøø, i odinzø 1485)
15. Odensvi, Viby sn, Grimstens hd, Örebro, Närke (i odhinswi 1385)
16. †Odenslunda, Aspö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (Otthinslundum 1100s)
17. †Odensvi, Kattnäs sn, Daga hd, Södermanland (j Odensui, j Odenswij 1361)
18. Onsberga, Runtuna sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (?othensberghe 1431)
19. Onsberga, Sättersta sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (odhinsbiærgh 1364)
20. Odensberga, Gryts sn, Daga hd, Södermanland (in Odhinsberghum 1348)
21. Odensicke, Ytterselö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (in odhinsheke 1331, j odhinseke 1365)
22. †Odensjö, probably in Rönö hd, Södermanland (j odensjö 1462)
23. ?Odensfors, Vretaklosters sn, Gullbergs hd, Östergötland (i wd hens ass 1500, odhensffors 1535)
24. ?Odenstomta, Kuddby sn, Björkekindes hd, Östergötland (i odhinstomptum 1409)
25. Odensåker, Kullerstads sn, Memings hd, Östergötland (j odhensakre 1375)

26. ?Odenstad, Gillberga sn and hd, Värmland (innan Odinstadum 1355, Jodhenstadhum 1361)
27. Onsön, island, Segerstads sn, Grums hd, Värmland (een öö ok heter Odhinsö 1480)
28. Vängsgärde, Orsa sn, Dalarna (odensgerdhe 1539)
29. Odensala, Östersund, Jämtland (i odhinsal 1410, j odinsall 1430)
30. Odensjö, Barnarps sn, Tveta hd, Småland (odhensioo, odhenssioo 1394, i Odhensiø 1456)
31. Odensjö, sn, Sunnerbo hd, Småland (i odhinsredha sokn 1389, Odhænsøryth 1413)
32. Odenslanda, Vederslövs sn, Kinnevalds hd, Småland (i Odhenslandom 1406)
33. Odensvi, sn, S. Tjusts hd, Småland (i Odenszwij 1358, in odhinswj 1371)
34. Odensvi, Högsby sn, Handbörds hd, Småland (in Othenswi 1351)
35. †Odensö, probably a small island in Emån, Högsby sn, Handbörds hd, Småland (vsque insulam Odensø 1344)
36. Odens källa, a well in Åkatorp, Gudhems sn and hd, Västergötland (widh odhens kyældu 1287)
37. Odensåker, sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (Othensaker 1292, odhensaker 1313)
38. Onsö, island in Lake Vänern, Torsö sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (jnsule dicte othensø 1371)
39. Onslunda, Flistads sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (Onslunde 1540)
40. Odens kulle, hill, Gökhemns sn, Vilske hd, Västergötland (Odens kulle 1561)
41. ?Onsered, Tvärreds sn, Kinds hd, Västergötland (odensrydh 1482)
42. ?Onsjö, Larvs sn, Laske hd, Västergötland (Onsky 1550)
43. Onsjö, Vassända-Naglums sn, Väne hd, Västergötland (odhenshögh 1397, i odinssiö 1517)
44. Onsön, Dals-Eds sn, Vedbo hd, Dalsland (een gardh i odhensø 1421)
45. Onsala, sn, Fjäre hd, Halland (de Othænsæle c. 1300, aff Otænsælæ 1403, i Odensale 1490)
46. Onssjö, Vapnö o Söndrums snr, Halmstads hd, Halland (in Oothensø 1377, i Odhinsyø 1399)
47. Onslunda, sn, Ingelstads hd, Skåne (aff Othænslundæ 1401, Othinslundæ 1430)
48. ?'Onsualle kielle', boundary mark in Höör, Höörs sn, Frosta hd, Skåne (aff Onssualle kielle 1517)
49. Onsjö, hd, Skåne (i odenshäradt 1245, in Othens H. 1351, i Odenshäradt 1351, in othænhæret 1297–1333, Othænssheret c. 1300 Vjb, in othinshæret 1330)

*Denmark*⁴⁷

1. Vognsbæk, Skærum and Hørmested sn, Horns hd, Jutland (Wonsbech 1530)
2. Vonsild, sn, Gislum hd, Jutland (Othensild 1428?, Vonssøld 1442)
3. Oddense, sn, Hindborg hd, Jutland (Otenssogen 1410, Odens 1463, Otthensæ 1464)
4. Onsild, hd, Jutland (Othenshylle c. 1186)
5. Oens, Ølsted sn, Hatting hd, Jutland (Ottens 1464, Otthens 1484)
6. Vonsild, sn, N. Tyrstrup hd, Jutland (Odenschulde 1436, Wondsyld 1452)
7. Vonsbæk, sn, Haderslev hd, Jutland (Odensbek 1413, Odensbeke 1462)
8. Vojens, sn, Gram hd, Jutland (Wodens 1421, Wodense, Wodenze 1475)
9. Onsbjerg, sn, Samsø (Othensberg 1424)

⁴⁷ Many thanks to Dr Peder Gammeltoft, The Name Research Section, Dept. of Scandinavian Research, University of Copenhagen, for help with identifications and written records.

10. Odense, Fyn (Othenesuuigensem 988, OÄSVI 1018-35, Odansue c. 1075, Othense, Othensæ 1123)
11. Onsved, Skuldelev sn, Horns hd, Sjælland (Othense 1085, Othænsweh 1320)

Þórr

Norway

1. †Torshov, Trøgstad hd, Østfold (i þosofuobærghom *RB*)
2. Torsnes, Borge hd, Østfold (þorsnæs c. 1400)
3. ?Tose (< Torshof) in Torsnes, Borge hd, Østfold (Tossse 1500s)
4. ?Torsnes, Våler hd, Østfold (þoresnese 1433)
5. Torshov, Aker hd, Akershus (i þossofuue 1370, þorshof 1376)
6. Torshov, Enebakk hd, Akershus (a þossaue 1403)
7. ?Torshov, Skedsmo hd, Akershus (Tousoug 1578)
8. Torshov, Gjerdrum hd, Akershus (a þorshofue *RB*)
9. ?Torshov, Vang hd, Hedmark (Torseg 1520, Torsogh 1578)
10. Torshov, Løiten hd, Hedmark (Taasshaagh 1475, Torshoff 1529)
11. Torshov, Jevnaker hd, Oppland (þorsof 1361)
12. ?†Torshov, Sigdal hd, Buskerud (Tozog 1578, Thossog 1617)
13. †Torsøy, Tjølling hd, Vestfold (þossøy *RB*)
14. Torstvet, Hedrum hd, Vestfold (Torsstweitt 1500s)
15. ?Torsnes, Vikedal hd, Rogaland (Thossnes 1602)
16. Totland, Alversund hd, Hordaland (af þorslande c. 1175, þorsland 1427, Thotland 1463, Torsland 1490)
17. Torsnes, Jondal hd, Hordaland (þorsnæs *BK*, þorsnes 1314)
18. ?Torsnes, Balestrand hd, Sogn og Fjordane (Torness 1500s, Torsnes 1603)
19. ?Torsæter, Y. Holmedal hd, Sogn og Fjordane (þorsætre *BK*)
20. ?Torsnes, Hillesø hd, Troms (Thorssnes 1614)

Totland (original Þorsland?)

1. Totland, Åserål hd, Vest-Agder (Todzlanndt 1595)
2. Totland, Ø. Siredal hd, Vest-Agder (Thotland 1619)
3. Totland, Finnås hd, Hordaland (Totland 1500s)
4. Totland, Samnanger hd, Hordaland (Thotland 1610)
5. Totland, Hosanger hd, Hordaland (Totland 1500s)
6. Totland, Masfjorden hd, Hordaland (Totland 1500s)
7. Totland, Daviken hd, Sogn og Fjordane (i Þothlandi *BK*, Thotlandt 1563)

Sweden

1. †Torshugle, Uppsala, Uppland (i Torsvlgom 1415, thorshugla land f. 1418, torsughlum 1430, j torsughlum 1440, een wreet nest sancti peders kyrkia Aff torsala bagga liggiandes 1479, vidh torsala bakka 1481)
2. Torslunda, Tierp sn, Uppland (torslunda 1544)
3. Torslund, Almunge sn, Närkehundra hd, Uppland (torslunda 1556)
4. ?Torsbro, Ramsta sn, Hagunda hd, Uppland (torsbro 1460)

5. Torslunda, Fröslunda sn, Lagunda hd, Uppland (i Torslundom 1420)
6. ?Torsmyra, Vendels sn, Örbyhus hd, Uppland (j torsmyra 1471)
7. Torsvi, sn, Trögsd hd, Uppland (De thorsui 1314, thorswi 1303)
8. Torsholma, Frösunda sn, Semingundra hd, Uppland (I þorsulmi U 343, Jn thorsholmi 1296)
9. ?Torsholm (= Munkholmen), Tärnsund, Uppland (in dorsholm 1298)
10. Torslunda, Täby sn, Danderyds skl, Uppland (j thorslundom 1457)
11. Torslunda, vicarage, Ekerö sn, Färentuna hd, Uppland (in thorslundum 1342)
12. Torslunda, Sänga sn, Färentuna hd, Uppland (Thorslundum 1257)
13. Torslunda, Husby-Lyhundra sn, Lyhundra hd, Uppland (ij torslunda 1536)
14. Torslunda, Haga sn, Ärlinghundra hd, Uppland (in thorslundum 1335)
15. Torsåker, hd, Uppland (ii thorsakirshundare 1370)
16. Torstuna, sn and hd, Uppland (torstunum 1257, de Thorstunum 1287)
17. Torslunda, Torstuna sn and hd, Uppland (Jn thorslundum 1296)
18. ?Torsmossen, Odensvi sn, Åkerbo hd, Västmanland (in thorsmusa 1331)
19. Torsåker, sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (De þorsaker 1314)
20. ?Torsholmen, (island in the lake Båven) Helgesta sn, Villåttinge hd, Södermanland (Thordsholm 1447, Torsholmen 1480, Torsholmen 1502)
21. Torshälla, town, Södermanland (thorsharchum 1252, thorshargy 1279, in thorshargi 1288)
22. Torsö, (island in Båven) Ludgo sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (torsøø 1476)
23. Torsberga, Stenkvista sn, Ö-Rekarne hd, Södermanland (j thorsberghum 1381)
24. Torsberga, Runtuna sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (torsberga 1535)
25. Torslunda, Husby-Oppunda sn, Oppunda hd, Södermanland (j thorslwndom 1375)
26. ?Torsnäs, Torsåkers sn, Rönö hd, Södermanland (thorsnæs 1384)
27. ?Torsjö, Ö. Ryds sn, Skärkinds hd, Östergötland (j thorsridhi 1371, j thorsydhe 1376, j thorsydhe 1381)
28. Torslund, Ö. Stenby sn, Östkindes hd, Östergötland (thorslundh 1393, i Thorslunde 1412)
29. ?Torsnäs, Ö. Eneby sn, Norröping, Östergötland (thoorsnæs 1453)
30. ?Torsnäs, V. Hargs sn, Vifolka hd, Östergötland (i Torsness 1488)
31. Torsnäs, Ö. Stenby sn, Östkindes hd, Östergötland (j thorsnæsi 1377, j thorsnæs 1383)
32. Torsåkra, Horns sn, Kinda hd, Östergötland (torsåker 1545)
33. Torsburgen, Gotland (þors borg GutaLaw)
34. Torslunda, sn, Algutsrums hd, Öland (de thorslundom 1283)
35. Torsrum, Ålems sn, Stranda hd, Småland (in thorsrumi 1316, j toorsrwm 1461)
36. Torsås, sn, S. Möre hd, Småland (Thorsas 1290, thorsas 1335)
37. ?Torsjö, Höreda sn, S. Vedbo hd, Småland (ij Torsrijd 1406, thorsio 1409)
38. Torsjö, Ö. Torsås sn, Konga hd, Småland (in Thorsyo, parochia Thorsas 1348)
39. Östra Torsås, sn, Konga hd, Småland (i Thorssaas sokn 1403, i torsas 1474)
40. ?Torset, Vallsjö sn, Västra hd, Småland (j torssryd c. 1500)
41. Västra Torsås, sn, Allbo hd, Småland (j thorsase 1376)
42. ?Torseryd, Odensjö sn, Sunnerbo hd, Småland (in Thorsrydh 1354)
43. ?Torset, Berga sn, Sunnerbo hd, Småland (j thorsrydh 1424)
44. Torsö, Otterstads sn, Kållands hd, Västergötland (jn thors øø 1311)
45. ?Torssundet, (strait between Lällandsö and Spårön) Kållands hd, Västergötland (ij thorsund 1391)
46. Torsö, sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (de torsøø 1293, in thorsø 1309, thorsø 1310)

47. ?Torse, Istorp sn, Marks hd, Västergötland (Thorzrijdh 1434)
48. Torsås, Brunnns sn, Redvägs hd, Västergötland (i Torsåesz 1540)
49. Torslanda, sn, V. Hisings hd, Bohuslän (j Þorslandum 1388, Thorslanda *RB* c. 1400)
50. Torsång, sn, Dalarna (thorsanger 1288, thorsang 1336, Thorsunge 1357, Thorsange 1368, Torsang 1368, j thorsang sokn 1386)
51. Torsvallen, Valbo sn, Gästrikland (i Thorsvallen 1443)
52. Torsåker, sn, Gästrikland (De thorsakir 1314, Deinde thorsakir 1302–19)
53. Torsåker, sn, Ångermanland (De thorsakir 1314, in thorsakir 1316)
54. ?Torsjö, Gunnarps sn, Halland (i torsridh, torssrid 1455)
55. ?Torsjö, (small lake) Enslövs sn, Tönnersjö hd, Halland (Thoresiø 1452)
56. Torsjö, Solberga and Örsjö snr, Vemmenhögs hd, Skåne (de Thorsyo 1349, thorssiø 1428)
57. Torseke, Fjälkestad sn, Villands hd, Skåne (y Thorsseeghe 1551)

Denmark

1. Torslunde, Sjælland (Torslundæ 1308)
2. Torslunde, Lolland (Torslund 1200s)
3. Torslund, Fyn (Thorslundæ 1315)
4. Torsager, Djursland, Jutland
5. Torsbjerg, Schlesvig

Ullr

Norway

1. ?Utlvet, Eidsberg hd, Østfold (Vlleþueit *RB*)
2. Ullarøy, Skjeberg hd, Østfold (Vllarœy 1349)
3. Ulleren, Aker hd, Akershus (i Ullarini *RB*)
4. Ullevål, Aker hd, Akershus (a Ullaruale 1309)
5. ?Ulreng, Skedsmo hd, Akershus (Vllerengh *RB*)
6. ?Ulleren, Ullensaker hd, Akershus (Vlreng 1520, Wllerudh 1500s)
7. Ulleren, S. Odalen hd, Hedmark (Ullerni *RB*)
8. †Ullarøy (now Gjersøien), S. Odalen hd, Hedmark (i Vllarœy 1306)
9. ?Ulland, Fåberg hd, Oppland (Wlleland 1604)
10. Ulleren, Hole hd, Buskerud (Ullaryn 1291)
11. †Ullarål, Norderhov hd, Buskerud (i Vllærrale 1355)
12. Ulleren, Ø. Eiker hd, Buskerud (a Ullaryn 1445)
13. ?Ulleland, Ø. Eiker hd, Buskerud (Wllalanddh 1430)
14. ?Ulland, Flesberg hd, Buskerud (Vllelannd 1500s)
15. Ulleviken, Sem hd, Vestfold (Vllarvik *RB*)
16. Ulleberg, Brunlanes hd, Vestfold (Wlleberg 1593)
17. Ullaren, Tinn hd, Telemark (Vlleren 1511)
18. ?Ulledalen, Kvitseid hd, Telemark (Vlledallen 1665)
19. ?Utlveit, Gjerstad hd, Aust-Agder (Vllethuedt 1593)
20. †Ullarøy, V. Moland hd, Aust-Agder (Ullerøen 1670)
21. ?Ullerø, Spind hd, Vest-Agder (Vllero 1594)
22. ?Ulleland, Fede hd, Vest-Agder (Vlleland 1594)

23. ?Ulland, Hitterø hd, Vest-Agder (Vlleland 1594)
24. †Ulleland, Nærbø hd, Rogaland (Ulleland 1668)
25. ?Ullenes, Rennesø hd, Rogaland (Vlnes 1563)
26. ?Ulland, Samnanger hd, Hordaland (Vlleland 1668)
27. ?Ulleland, Volden hd, Møre (or Vllarlande 1324)

Sweden

1. †Ullund(a), Kungshusby sn, Trögd, Uppland (j wllelund 1457)
2. Ullbolsta, Jumkils sn, Ulleråkers hd, Uppland (de vllabolstad 1316, in vllabolstadh 1316)
3. Ullunda, Tillinge sn, Åsunda hd, Uppland (ii Vllalunde 1353)
4. Ullbro, Tillinge sn, Åsunda hd, Uppland (Vllabro 1444, j vllabro 1445)
5. Ulleråker, hd, Uppsala, Uppland (vllarakir 1298)
6. Ultuna, Uppsala, Uppland (Wlertune 1221, in vllatunum 1316)
7. Ullevi, Stora, Bro sn and hd, Uppland (in wllawi 1326)
8. Ullevi, Lilla, Bro sn and hd, Uppland (j Wllawij 1486)
9. Ullfors, Tierps sn, Örbyhus hd, Uppland (wllafors 1326, i Ullæfors 1357)
10. Ullstämma, Litslena sn, Trögds hd, Uppland (i Vllastempne 1419)
11. Ulleråker, Simtuna sn and hd, Uppland (vllarakyr 1346, j Vllarakri 1360)
12. Ullberga, Råby-Rekarne sn, V.-Rekarne hd, Södermanland (j wllabergh 1461)
13. †Ullalunda, Jäders sn, Österrekarne hd, Södermanland (j vllælunde 1344)
14. Ullevi, Överjärna sn, Öknebo hd, Södermanland
15. Ullevi, Sorunda sn, Sotholms hd, Södermanland (wllau 1400-t., i vllawy 1452)
16. Ullevi, Gåsinge sn, Daga hd, Södermanland (j vllawij 1366)
17. Ullevi, Nikolai sn (Nyköping), Jönåkers hd, Södermanland (vllæui 1330)
18. †Ullunda, Ytterenhörna sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (en by benempd Vllalund j Enhörna sockn 1358)
19. Ullunda, Yterselö sn, Selebo hd, Södermanland (i wllalundum 1356)
20. Ullvi, Irsta sn, Siende hd, Västmanland (in Vllau 1371)
21. Ullvi, Munktorps sn, Snevringe hd, Västmanland (i vllawy 1382)
22. Ullvi, Köpings sn, Åkerbo hd, Västmanland (in Wllæui 1349, j wllau, aff vllau c. 1400)
23. ?Ullekalv, Högby sn, Göstrings hd, Östergötland (vllacalf 1337, i wllakalfwe 1384)
24. Ullstämma, Landeryds sn, Hanekinds hd, Östergötland (vllastempnu 1317)
25. Ullevi(d), Örberga sn, Dals hd, Östergötland (in Ullervi 1313, in vllærui 1320)
26. Ullevi, Järstads sn, Göstrings hd, Östergötland (af Vllawi 1358, ii vllau 1376)
27. Ullevi, Kimstads sn, Memmings hd, Östergötland (ii wllawi 1381)
28. Ullevi, St. Lars sn (Linköping), Östergötland (de wllawi 1300, in vllævi 1343)
29. Ulbersta, Skärkinds sn and hd, Östergötland (af vllabolstaþ 1367, af vllabolstadh 1371)
30. Ullavi, V. Stenby sn, Aska hd, Östergötland (i Wllawy 1434)
31. Ullnäs, Örberga sn, Dals hd, Östergötland (vllanæs 1432, j vllanæs 1435)
32. ?†Ullanäs, Nora sn, Närke (vllanæs j nora sokn 1415)
33. Ullavi, Askersund, Sundbo hd, Närke (ij Vllau 1405)
34. †Ullavi (cf. Ullavisjön between Rinkeby and Glanshammar), Närke (Ullavi 1606)
35. Ullavi, Kils sn, Närke (Ullevi hamn 1554)
36. ?Ullersäter, Näsby sn, Fellingsbro hd, Närke (i Wllasæthrom 1413, i Wllasæthrom 1413)
37. Ullevi, Sköllersta sn and hd, Närke (ij gårde i Wllewich 1498)

38. ?Ullerud, Nedre, sn, Kils hd, Värmland (de vllarø 1326, Ullarø 1330–34)
39. ?Ullene, sn, Vilske hd, Västergötland (Ollene 1330–34, vllene sokin 1447)
40. ?Ullervad, sn, Vadsbo hd, Västergötland (vllerwi 1278, vlærwi 1293)
41. ?Ullasjö, sn, Kinds hd, Västergötland (de wllæsio 1314, vllasio 1406)
42. Ullerön, Dals-Eds sn, Vedbo hd, Dalsland (een gardh j wllerø 1421)
43. Ullevi, Gårdby sn, Möckelby hd, Öland (j vllawj 1448)
44. Ullevi, Gamleby sn, S. Tjusts hd, Småland (in vllau 1340, in wllawi, in vllawy 1346)
45. †Ullavi (mentioned with Rottne, Söraby sn, Norrvidinge hd), Småland (Wllau 1350)
46. Ullvi, Leksands sn, Dalarna (j vllevi 1450)
47. Ullberg, Njurunda, Medelpad (vllebergghe 1472, i vlleberg 1500, i Wllebärgh 1502, i vlleberg 1515)
48. †Ullvi, Hackås sn, Jämtland

Ullinn

Norway

1. Ullensaker (< Ullinshof), hd, Akershus (Ullinshofs sokn 1300)
2. Ullershov, Nes hd, Akershus (a Vllinshofue *RB*)
3. †Ullinshof (Nes vicarage), Nes hd, Hedmark (Vllinshofwe 1341)
4. †Ullinsvin (Våge vicarage), Våge hd, Oppland (aVllinsin 1354, a Vllinsini 1356)
5. Ullensaker, N. Land, Oppland (Vllinssakærs sokn 1337)
6. Ulsåker, Hemsedal hd, Buskerud (Vllesaack 1500s, Vllenssagger 153, Vllendtzagger 1604)
7. Ullensvang, sn and hd, Hordaland (Ullinsvangr 1309)
8. Ulleland, Førde hd, Sogn og Fjordane (i Ullinslande *BK*)

Abbreviations

<i>AB</i>	<i>Aslaks Bolts Jordebog</i> , ed. by P. A. Munch (Oslo: [n.pub.], 1852) [1430s–40s]
<i>BK</i>	<i>Björgynjar kálfskinn</i> , ed. by P. A. Munch (Oslo: [n.pub.], 1843) [c. 1360]
Goth	Gothic
hd	hundred district (herred, hæradh)
lfs	landsförsamling
MFr	Middle Frisian
MLG	Middle Low German
<i>NG</i>	<i>Norske Gaardnavne</i> , 19 vols (Oslo: Cammermeyer, 1897–1936)
<i>NSL</i>	<i>Norsk stadnamnleksikon</i> , ed. by J. Sandnes and O. Stemshaug, 3rd edn (Oslo: Samlaget, 1990)
ODa	Old Danish
OE	Old English
OHG	Old High German
ON	Old Norse
OSax	Old Saxon
OSw	Old Swedish
Pr.-Germ.	Proto-Germanic

RB	<i>Biskop Eysteins Jordebog (Den Røde Bog): Fortegnelse over det geistlige Gods i Oslo Bispedømme omkring Aar 1400</i> , ed. by H. J. Huitfeldt (Oslo: [n.pub.], 1879)
skl	skeppslag
sn	parish district

Translations of Frequent Name Elements

ak(i)r/åker/ager	‘arable land’
berg	‘hill, mountain’
eke	‘oak grove’
eng/äng	‘meadow’
fors	‘rapid, stream’
hof/hov	‘pagan cult site or building’
hol	‘mound, small hill’
holme	‘island, peninsula’
hyllæ	‘shelf, ledge’
hǫrgr, harg	‘pagan cult site (of some kind)’
källa	‘well’
kulle	‘small hill’
land	‘grassland, field, arable land’
lund	‘grove’
lög/lag	e.g. ‘laws’, and later ‘law district’
nes/næs	‘peninsula’
ø/ö	‘island’
sal(r)	‘(banqueting) hall’
sø/sjö	‘lake’
vangr	‘grass land, field’
vi/vé/væ	‘pagan cult site’
vin	originally ‘(kind of) meadow’
vǫllr/vall	‘grass land, levelled field’

ÓÐINN, WARRIORS, AND DEATH

Jens Peter Schjødt

In two articles from 2002 and 2003 Margaret Clunies Ross discussed the fact that we have rather scanty information about the rituals of the pre-Christian religion of the North.¹ Although different textual genres in the vernacular do provide some material, it is very poor compared with what we know about myths from the same sources. If we include material written by non-Scandinavians, however, almost the opposite is the case: we have a great deal of information about rituals but very little about myth and mythical ideas. Margaret Clunies Ross is no doubt right to propose that this is due, at least partially, to the fact that whereas a myth can be narrated after a change in religion — perhaps with minor or major alterations — rituals simply cannot be performed after such a change, and they would therefore soon have disappeared from the memories of early Christians. This causes serious trouble for historians of religion since ritual is a phenomenon that is just as important as myth. The scanty information we do have is mostly of a very general character such as ‘Óðinn received human sacrifices’ or ‘the walls in the cult houses were sprinkled with sacrificial blood’. These descriptions may reflect actual situations, but without specific information about who performed the rituals and why they were performed and so forth, it is hardly possible to put this information in its proper context and thus to understand what was going on in the light of the overall ideology of pagan society.

¹ Margaret Clunies Ross, ‘Närvaron och frånvaron av ritual i norröna medeltida tekster’, in *Plats och praxis: Arkeologiska och religionshistoriska studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*, ed. by Kristina Jennbert, Anders Andrén, and Catharina Raudvere, *Vägar till Midgård*, 2 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002), pp. 13–30 (p. 18), and ‘Two Old Icelandic Theories of Ritual’, in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), pp. 279–99 (p. 282).

The purpose of this article is to discuss some aspects of the cult of Óðinn. As a consequence of the lack of direct evidence, it is obviously not possible to 'reconstruct' in any detail or with absolute certainty the rituals that were no doubt performed in this cult. Nevertheless, we do have some evidence which, in my opinion, allows us to approach some important aspects of the cult, namely who worshipped Óðinn and for what reasons. A study of these aspects obliges us to consider some of the mythic notions concerning this god as well. It is not my intention to take up the discussion once again of the figure of Óðinn as he is presented in the mythological texts that are traditionally turned to when describing the gods of the ancient Scandinavians. These texts — the eddic poems, *Snorra Edda*, *Ynglinga Saga*, and some others — must of course be taken into account when we try to draw a complete picture of Óðinn. However, the main purpose here is to discuss the god more directly in relation to the humans by whom he was worshipped.

It is remarkable that although Óðinn is sovereign among the gods in the mythological texts, we are told even less about his worship than about other gods such as Þórr, who is mentioned frequently, especially in the *Íslendingasögur*, where sacrifices, amulets, and other cultic objects associated with him are described. Óðinn, however, is hardly mentioned in these sagas. There may be several reasons for this, but a primary reason is probably the provenance of these texts in Iceland, a country without kings and nobility of the kind we know of from the rest of Scandinavia. Another reason is that Þórr was undoubtedly better suited as a direct rival to Christ because he was 'clean' — he fought the powers of chaos, he promoted fertility, and he was faithful to those who believed in him and performed appropriate rituals. But earlier in pagan times, and perhaps in other milieus, Óðinn was also a venerated god, as is obvious from the eddic poems and from Snorri's account in his *Edda*, and in *Ynglinga saga*. We know from Adam of Bremen's account that he had a special relation to war and was worshipped when war was threatening. We also know that Óðinn took part physically in human wars, whereas Þórr, who was also associated with war, only fought mythical battles. On the other hand, it has also been observed by many scholars that Óðinn was probably mainly worshipped by the noble class to which he had a special relation, as described, perhaps most directly, in *Hárbarðsljóð* 24 — and again this aspect of Óðinn is characterized in opposition to Þórr.

As opposed to the *Íslendingasögur*, the *fornaldarsögur* — which for the most part take place in Scandinavia — actually contain a relatively large amount of information about Óðinn, almost exclusively concerning his interaction with

human beings. The focus of this article will be especially on these stories.² These sagas do not give us any direct information about worship either, but I shall argue that we can nevertheless form an impression of the role Óðinn played in the lives of humans. It is often emphasized in scholarly work that Óðinn was not a god who could be trusted.³ He sometimes let down his chosen heroes, and he was often directly involved in their deaths, as is the case with Haraldr hilditǫnn in *Gesta Danorum* and Sigmundr in *Völsunga saga*. This fact is usually explained with reference to *Eiríksmál*, where it is said by Óðinn himself that the reason for taking the great kings to Valhöll is that the gods must be prepared for Ragnarök. Although this mythological explanation may reflect the ways pre-Christian Scandinavians actually conceived of the unreliability of the god, it does not explain why Óðinn sometimes turned against his chosen heroes. First and foremost, of course, the myth is etiological in the widest sense, since it was a common experience that great kings and warriors, who were supposed to be great exactly because they were favourites of Óðinn as war god, at some point would be defeated and killed. This, in the internal logic of the relation between man and gods, meant that the god had abandoned them. A broader explanation, however, should be sought, and at more than one level. As already mentioned, it seems likely that the explanation which referred to Ragnarök played a part; but this in itself would create a problem since not all great warriors died in battle. What we have to look for is, on the one hand, the fundamental relation that Óðinn had to death and, on the other, the relation between Óðinn and his chosen heroes.

² In an extremely useful recent article, Annette Lassen discusses the role of Óðinn in the *fornaldarsögur*: 'Den prosaiske Odin: Fortidssagaerne som mytografi', in *Fornaldarsagornas struktur och ideologi: Handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala 31.8–2.9 2001*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, and Agneta Ney, Nordiska Texter och Undersökningar, 28 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, Institutionen för nordiska språk, 2003), pp. 205–20. Besides giving us a complete list of the passages in which Óðinn features, she also compares his actions in these sagas with the information found in *Snorra Edda* and the *Poetic Edda*, and concludes that there are no discrepancies between the two groups of sources. It should be mentioned that Lassen takes a rather negative view of our ability to come to any conclusions about the pagan Óðinn. Her object is obviously the figure of Óðinn as he is portrayed in the thirteenth century. I am certainly not as pessimistic about this, as will become clear in the following.

³ See recently Gro Steinsland, *Norron religion: Myter, riter, samfunn* (Oslo: Pax, 2005), p. 177; Britt-Mari Näsström, *Fornskandinavisk religion: En grundbok* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2001), p. 55; and Andreas Nordberg, *Krigarna i Odins sal: Dödsföreställningar och krigarkult i fornnordisk religion* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2003), p. 123.

Different Abodes of the Dead

In a famous passage from *Gylfaginning*, Snorri (or rather Gangleri) says: ‘Þat segir þú at allir þeir menn er í orrosto hafa fallit frá upphafi heims eru nú komnir til Óðins í Valhøll.’⁴ This, together with another statement concerning Hel,⁵ has been taken to indicate that the manner of a person’s death determined their destination in the afterlife. But as Andreas Nordberg has recently argued, these statements should not be taken too literally.⁶ As is the case with many statements about cosmology, they should be understood metaphorically. In poetic language especially, the same content can be expressed in a number of different ways. Thus, ‘to die’ (even violently) may be expressed as an erotic meeting with a female.⁷ There is no reason to believe, however, that ancient Scandinavians ever had any systematic ideas about the afterlife, just as is the case for most other religions. There are references to people who have drowned who go to an abode with the goddess Rán and to people who are thought to have an afterlife in the mound in which they were buried. And there are other conceptions too.

So neither the poetic language nor the actual ideas were probably very precise or consistent. From an existential point of view there is no doubt that this uncertainty was common. This is supported by the variety of ideas about the afterlife expressed in the sources, which should not initially be interpreted historically.⁸ This considered, however, it is evident that the way Valhøll and Hel are described by Snorri is not coincidental. These two abodes seem to be structural inversions of one another, and not only in relation to the identity of those who dwelt there and the manner of their deaths. One could argue that the idea of two abodes, one beyond and positive and the other below and negative, might have been inspired by Christianity. But although this cannot be ruled out completely with regard to some details, there seems to be more at stake. On the one hand, Valhøll is characterized by masculinity, that is, the activities there can be classified by masculine

⁴ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes, 2nd edn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 32. (‘You say that all those men who have fallen in battle from the beginning of the world have now come to Óðinn in Valhøll.’) Translations are my own.

⁵ ‘[. . .] hon skipti ǫllum vistum með þeim er til hennar vóro sendir, en þat eru sórttdauðir menn ok ellidauðir’: *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 27. (‘[. . .] she had to accommodate all those who were sent to her, and that is those who have died of sickness or of old age’.)

⁶ *Krigarna i Odins sal*, pp. 273–74.

⁷ Gro Steinsland, *Eros og død i norrøne myter* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1997), pp. 97–123.

⁸ See Nordberg, *Krigarna i Odins sal*, pp. 36–41.

ideals:⁹ the inhabitants have died in battle (obviously a male activity) and are ruled over by a masculine ruler, Óðinn. Hel, on the other hand, is ruled over by the goddess of the same name and the activities there, as far as we can speak of activities at all, seem to be far from the ideals of a masculine life. In this opposition the marked pole is definitely that represented by Valhøll. There is no hint either that Hel should be a place of punishment or that Valhøll should be one of reward for something that could be construed in an ethical way. Thus, even though there is the same dualism in certain aspects (up vs. down; pleasure vs. gloom), there are other aspects that cannot be interpreted as Christian, and there is no reason to reject the information we get from Snorri as altogether unreliable.

This means that there are reasons to accept Nordberg's argument that the basic ideas concerning the relation between Óðinn and Valhøll are not of late origin. On the contrary, there are reasons to believe that these basic ideas are very old, and some of these reasons are associated with the kind of 'guests' who went to Valhøll, and Óðinn's relation to them when they were alive. It is said in a number of sources that those who go to Óðinn are noble people (e.g. *Hárbarðsljóð* 24, *Gesta Danorum*, II, vii, 22¹⁰). We must ask what this actually means: what kind of people can expect to go to Óðinn? It is clear from several sources that kings, princes, and other rulers will join Óðinn after their death. But it also seems as if warriors in general, or at least some warriors, are going to meet him after they are killed, and we must therefore ask how these groups were related to Óðinn.

Who Were the Einherjar?

I have argued elsewhere that both kings and warriors were initiated during rituals in which a bond was created to Óðinn.¹¹ The main argument concerning the

⁹ Whether there were women in Valhøll other than the valkyries is hard to determine. But it is not sufficient to argue *ex silentio* that this was not the case. The slave girl who, in Ibn Fadlan's account, is killed in order to join her dead master is no doubt expected to go to the same place as the chieftain.

¹⁰ *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, vol. I: *Text*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 4th edn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962), p. 82, and Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum* I, ed. by J. Olrik and H. Ræder (Copenhagen: Levin & Munksgaard, 1931), p. 59.

¹¹ For kings, see 'Det sakrale kongedømme i det førkristne Norden', *Chaos: Dansk-norsk tidsskrift for religionshistorie*, 13 (1990), 48–67; and for warriors, 'Krigeren i førkristen nordisk myte og ideologi', in *Religion och samhälle i det förkristna Norden: Ett symposium*, ed. by Ulf Drobin and others (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999), pp. 195–208.

initiation of kings and their relation to Óðinn was proposed by Jere Fleck in 1970.¹² On the basis of an analysis of the relevant passages in the poems *Hyndluljóð*, *Grímnismál*, and *Rígsþula*, he argues that each interaction represents the numinous teaching of a potential king by a divine being. This acquisition of numinous knowledge by the king is to be seen as the *sine qua non* for the conduct of sacral kingship.¹³ The scope of this article does not allow me to go into his analysis in detail, but I will just quote the conclusion of Fleck's analysis of *Rígsþula*:

I contend that here a ritual education in numinous knowledge as a part of a younger/ youngest son's individual consecration to a godly figure formed the decisive factor in the succession to a Germanic sacred kingship.¹⁴

All three poems show that a young man receives numinous knowledge and is supposed to become a king afterwards. This is clear in *Grímnismál* and *Rígsþula* and has also been argued convincingly in relation to *Hyndluljóð*, by Gro Steinsland, for instance.¹⁵ The divine instructors, however, are three different figures, Óðinn, Freyja, and Heimdallr,¹⁶ and this may be due to different traditions.¹⁷ In any case, Fleck, as well as others, has argued convincingly that some sort of initiation, including an acquisition of numinous knowledge, took place before a person could be placed on the throne. This can also be seen in relation to the heroes Sigmundr and Sigurðr (*Völsunga saga*) and Hadingus (the saga of Hadingus by Saxo), who are going to be kings and who receive divine instruction, in both cases by Óðinn.

¹² Jere Fleck, 'Konr – Óttarr – Geirröðr: A Knowledge Criterion for Succession to the Germanic Sacred Kingship', *Scandinavian Studies*, 42 (1970), 39–49.

¹³ The literature on this subject is immense, as can be seen in the bibliography in the entry, 'Sakralkönigtum', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd rev. edn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–), xxvi (2004), 179–320.

¹⁴ Fleck, 'Konr – Óttarr – Geirröðr', p. 42. Fleck's discussion of 'ultimogeniture' and 'primogeniture' is not important here, although it is highly relevant to the question of who could be chosen as king. In the present connection the decisive element is that numinous knowledge is more important than primogeniture.

¹⁵ Gro Steinsland, *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi: En analyse af hierogamimyten i Skírnismál, Ynglingatal, Háleygjatal og Hyndluljóð* (Oslo: Solum, 1991), pp. 242–59.

¹⁶ Whether it is only the prose frame that identifies Rígr with Heimdallr cannot be decided with any certainty. It has been proposed that in the poem itself it may be Óðinn who is the divine initiator (Rudolf Simek, *Lexikon der germanischen Mythologie* (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1984), p. 330).

¹⁷ See my *Initiation Between Two Worlds: Structure and Symbolism in Pre-Christian Scandinavian Religion*, Viking Collection, 17 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, forthcoming).

In the case of Sigmundr and Hadingus, there is no doubt that they go to Óðinn after their deaths and, although this is by no means explicit in all cases, it seems probable that kings in general were understood to go to Valhøll. This may be connected with the conception that kings were descended from Óðinn, a relationship that may have been created ritually through initiation rituals.

But kings were not the only persons in Valhøll. In general, warriors seem to have lived there as *einherjar*. Thus we know from *Eiríksmál* 5 that not only Sigmundr was there, but also Sinfjötli, who was definitely not a king. Sinfjötli was a hero, though, and a great warrior, but he did not fall in battle, so we must ask how this could be in accordance with Snorri's statement that only those who fall in battle could go there. In other words: how can we explain the fact that people who did not fall in battle went to the warrior paradise of Valhøll? One possibility is, of course, to reject Snorri altogether or to accept that there could have been other versions of the death of Sinfjötli. But, as previously mentioned, there seems to be a genuine structural pattern in Snorri's systematization of the two abodes of the dead, and the death of Sinfjötli also bears the traces of a genuine myth, so perhaps we should look for another explanation.

If warriors, as well as kings, went to Valhøll, and if warriors who did not fall in battle could go there too, it should be possible to find some common features of these different groups, and, perhaps, some features which are not in opposition to the structure described by Snorri. The key, I believe, is to be found in another work by Snorri, namely *Ynglinga saga*. Here we have two passages which may have considerable explanatory value, namely chapter 6, in which we learn about the *berserkir*, and chapter 9, in which we are told about the deaths of Óðinn and Njǫrðr. The *berserkir* have caused a lot of trouble for historians of religion. Who were they? Are our sources reliable as an expression of pagan ideas or are *berserkir* a pure literary fiction? In a paper read at the International Saga Conference in Bonn in 2003, Anatoly Liberman attacked most of the ideas that have been current among scholars concerning *berserkir*.¹⁸ He started out by proposing that even if there is a striking parallel between *berserkir* and *ulfsheðnar* in Þórbjörn hornklofi's *Haraldskvæði* (st. 8), they should not be understood in similar terms. Whereas he apparently accepts that the *ulfsheðnar* had some religious significance in pagan times,

¹⁸ Anatoly Liberman, 'Berserkir: A Double Legend', in *Scandinavia and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages: Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference, Bonn, Germany, 28th July–2nd August 2003*, ed. by Rudolf Simek and Judith Meurer (Bonn: Hausdruckerei der Universität Bonn, 2003), pp. 337–40.

he argues that this was not the case with the *berserkir*.¹⁹ After having discussed some tendencies in the interpretations of the *berserkir* complex, he concludes:

If we dismiss idle speculations, we will come up with the following results. Some warriors were at one time called *berserkir*. They seem to have been elite troops renowned for their recklessness in battle; they may have fought without coats of mail. It is unclear whether folk etymology connected them with bears and whether Snorri or anyone heard an allusion to *ber-* 'bear' in their name. They had nothing to do with religious cults.²⁰

Lieberman then goes on to speculate about the development from the end of the Viking epoch to the thirteenth century when *berserkir* were used as antagonists in written sagas. There is much to say about Lieberman's paper, but it is not possible to go into all aspects here. What is of direct interest for the subject of this article, however, is Lieberman's statement about Óðinn's role in the *berserkir* complex, since he denies a relation between the wild hunt, the *einherjar*, and the *berserkir*. He states, 'It is safe to assume that myths of Óðinn's berserkers did not exist'.²¹ It is true that there is not much evidence of warrior bands which were ultimately linked by some religious bond to Óðinn, but does that really mean that it is 'safe' to deny such a relation? The source situation concerning Old Norse religion is of a kind that should caution against exaggerated use of *argumenta ex silentio*. And I believe that there is textual evidence which allows a link between *berserkir* and Óðinn to be reconstructed. It should be admitted at once that 'proof' cannot be given, but if 'proof' is to be understood in a narrow sense, the historical reconstruction of lost religions is impossible. And besides, there is further evidence to be taken into account which is not referred to by Lieberman. He does include some of the saga accounts in his considerations and finds, rightly, a certain pattern according to which *berserkir* are exclusively used as antagonists in order to allow the brave Iclander to show how good he is. However, Lieberman also mentions *Hrólfs saga kraka* and the 'Hrólfr kraki type of stories', noting that 'When berserkers are projected to a semi legendary past, they appear as a king's retinue, as happens in *Hrólfs saga*'.²² So let us take a closer look at this saga.

¹⁹ Lieberman mentions the Sigmundur-Sinfjötli episode in *Völsunga saga*, and those interpretations which present initiation to some sort of group of *ulfhednar* as an important element. He apparently accepts these interpretations, whereas he does not accept the view that this episode is also significant for our understanding of the *berserkir*. See Lieberman, 'Berserkir', p. 339.

²⁰ Lieberman, 'Berserkir', p. 340.

²¹ Lieberman, 'Berserkir', p. 339. It should be mentioned in this connection that according to Lieberman Snorri 'described berserkers according to the "folklore" of his time' in *Ynglinga saga* ('Berserkir', p. 338).

²² Lieberman, 'Berserkir', p. 338.

The only element that is mentioned by Liberman is the one mentioned above, that is, the *berserkir* sitting in the King's hall. We know that the saga is late, probably from the late fourteenth century or even later; and there is no doubt that, as Liberman also notes, the notion of *berserkir* at that time was very negative. Nevertheless, the author of the saga depicts them as Hrólfr's retinue, and thus as elite troops. The saga's negative attitude towards them, however, marks them as opposites to the true heroes, namely the *kappar*, the group to which Svipdagr, Bǫðvarr, and the other individualized heroes belong. Only one incident opposes this pattern, namely when Svipdagr and the leader of the *berserkir* are about to go into a fight and the King intervenes and says that they should be seen as equals and that they should both be his friends: 'Ok eftir þat sættust þeir ok eru jafnan á einu ráði, liggja í hernaði ok hafa sigr, hvar sem þeir komu' (chapter 22).²³ This suggests that the opposition is perhaps not as thorough-going as one might think, and this is supported by the fact that in the hall, the *kappar* Bǫðvarr, Hjalti, Svipdagr, Hvítserkr, and Beigaðr are seated next to the King on both sides, and next to them the *berserkir* (chapter 37), although we might expect that the rest of the *kappar* mentioned in chapter 49 would be seated in this position. It therefore seems as if the *berserkir* and the *kappar* are somewhat mixed up, which is probably because at the time of writing of the saga the *berserkir* could not be depicted in a positive way. But as we saw from his conclusion, Liberman accepted that it is likely that they were elite troops. What he did not accept was that they could have had any religious foundation; nor did he accept that they could be connected with Óðinn, or that the element of the compound *ber-* could have denoted 'bear' in pagan times.

If we take a closer look at the entire saga, however, it seems obvious that bears play a prominent role and that, in addition, Óðinn also has a major role. As regards the bear, its significance is mostly elaborated in connection to Bǫðvarr Bjarki, who is the leader of the *kappar* (who might in turn be identified with *berserkir*): his father was named Björn and he was transformed into a bear by magic; and Bǫðvarr himself has the ability to transform himself into a bear. Further, Saxo mentions that the monster which Hǫttir has to kill in a clearly initiatory manner was in fact a bear (II, vi, 11). Now all this is certainly best explained by accepting that these elements are not just coincidences — that they represent a pattern which probably fitted the traditional way of looking at *berserkir*, namely as warriors who in some way were associated with bears. It is impossible to tell

²³ *Fornaldar sögur Nordurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnauktáfan, 1950), I, 42 ('and after that they are reconciled and they are always in agreement and have victory in battle wherever they came').

from this distance in time whether they once fought in bear skins or if they were perhaps only transformed into bears during initiations. However, this would not prevent them from roaring like bears when fighting in actual battles — which was probably rather frightening. Of course the belief that these warriors were bears only extends to the ritual transformation: being a warrior of this special kind demanded that they were strong and savage like bears.²⁴ From this we can easily imagine how notions, perhaps expressed in myths or semi-myths along the lines of *Bǫðvars þáttr*, could develop. Another element which, in my opinion, strongly indicates that there is a relation between bears and *berserkir*, at least in connection with initiations, is the way the *berserkir* arrive in the hall: the first thing they do is to go to all the men in the hall and ask them if they think that they are as strong as they are themselves (chapters 22 and 37). Kris Kershaw has suggested that this might also have been a pattern in the initiation ritual, and there is no doubt that the way these incidents are described in the saga have a ritual aura, which suggests that, in order to become a member of the band, one would have to fight a *berserkr*.²⁵ Perhaps if the monster that Hǫttr 'kills' in the saga was actually a bear, this may have been a variation or a supplement to fighting with a real *berserkr*: if you were able to kill a bear, you were ritually transformed into a warrior who was not afraid of fighting *berserkir*. All of these bear incidents in *Hrólfs saga kraka* certainly form a pattern that parallels what we know from initiations of warriors in many different societies, and they are difficult to explain unless we accept that the author of the saga had some detailed knowledge of old traditions about the men surrounding the King who were compared to bears and who, whether the etymology is accurate or not, were in time labelled *berserkir*.

I shall now return to the other point which was rejected by Liberman, namely the role of Óðinn in relation to these warrior bands. According to Liberman, this relation is only present in *Ynglinga saga*. This may be valid if we limit our

²⁴ Thus there is no reason to imagine that these *berserkir* were ever thought of as bears in any fundamental way. As Lévi-Strauss proposed many years ago, animals and other natural species are 'good to think with', because they may illuminate how different groups of people are related to each other, namely in the same way as different groups of animals are related. Accepting that certain groups of warriors were thought of as bears does not necessarily mean any more than when players from a certain football club are called lions or sharks. They are not thought of as actually being lions or sharks, but when playing football they act like lions in a metaphorical way.

²⁵ Kris Kershaw, *The One-Eyed God: Odin and the (Indo-) Germanic Männerbünde*, Journal of Indo-European Studies Monograph Series, 36 (Washington, D.C.: Journal of Indo-European Studies, 2000), pp. 57–58.

consideration to direct evidence. There is, however, a lot of indirect evidence that should be taken into consideration; and one source of this is certainly *Hrólfs saga kraka*. As already mentioned, this saga is very late and, of course, some interpretation is needed in order to get behind the medieval setting. One important feature here is the depiction of Hrólfr as a ‘noble heathen’. He was not religiously committed to the pagan gods. Nevertheless, he does have a certain relation to Óðinn which can be seen in chapters 39 and 46, where the King and his *kappar* and many other men visit a farmer called Hrani, who turns out to be Óðinn. At their first visit, he gives them good advice by testing their endurance and telling the King to send home all the men except the *kappar* who, as we have seen, can hardly be separated from the *berserkir*. At the second visit, on their way home from Aðils, he offers them weapons, which, however, the King refuses. This second incident may be due to the Christian setting,²⁶ but the first one is significant. Only the King and those who have shown the proper endurance of a warrior are chosen by the advice of the god. And these are the King’s *kappar/berserkir*. A relation between Óðinn and the *berserkir* therefore does not seem to be too far-fetched. Further, it should be noticed that the person who recognizes that Hrani is actually Óðinn is Bǫðvarr, who, as we have seen, is particularly ‘bearlike’.

In another *fornaldarsaga*, *Egils saga einhenda ok Ásmundar berserkjabana*, the hero Ásmundr is about to be sacrificed by some *berserkir* (chapter 8), but escapes.²⁷ However, the god who is to receive the sacrifice is Óðinn, and the reason for sacrificing Ásmundr is to secure victory. Ásmundr himself, with the surname *berserkjabani*, is said to have been killed by Óðinn with a spear (chapter 18) in much the same way as other Odinic heroes, for instance Sigmundr. Now in the saga narrative Ásmundr is certainly not a friend of Óðinn, but having killed *berserkir*, his being taken home by Óðinn makes it seem likely that what is at stake here is a vague memory of some legendary hero who had a special relationship with Óðinn during an initiation which made him an Odinic hero — an initiation which consisted in ‘killing’ one or more *berserkir* who would sacrifice him, that is, initiate him to the god by whom he is killed in the end.

²⁶ It may nonetheless be significant that although the men suspect Hrani is really Óðinn, once they realize that they have done something stupid and try to find him again, he has disappeared, and they then understand that they will not be victorious in the future. Even though Óðinn is said to be an evil spirit, the *kappar* accept his power: severing their bond to the god means the disappearance of their luck in battle.

²⁷ Later in the same chapter, after he has escaped, it is said that he killed twelve men including the *berserkir*.

So, the warriors who were initiated to Óðinn and had lived their lives as Odinic warriors were taken home by the god himself. But the sources tell us that there is yet another way through which one could secure a life in Valhøll, and that is narrated in *Ynglinga saga* chapter 9. Here it is said that Óðinn himself, when he was about to die, 'lét hann marka sik geirsoddi ok eignaði sér alla vápndauða menn, sagði hann sik mundu fara í Goðheima ok fagna þar vinum sínum'.²⁸ And later in the same chapter, it is mentioned that Njǫrðr 'lét hann ok marka sik Óðni, áðr hann dó'.²⁹ It is thus possible to go to Goðheimr, which we should no doubt see as a parallel to Valhøll, if one is marked with a spear. This is frequently, and no doubt correctly, seen as a parallel to the ritual of throwing a spear in order to dedicate the enemy to Óðinn. This ritual is in accordance with Snorri's statement that those who die in battle will go to Valhøll, although it is not said explicitly that a spear was thrown over them. Underlying the statement that 'allir þeir menn er í orrosto hafa fallit frá upphafi heims eru nú komnir til Óðins í Valhøll' is then the knowledge that these men had been dedicated to the god. According to the sources, this could be brought about by either throwing a spear over the enemy or, if a person were to die in bed, by marking him with a spear. As is well known, the spear is an attribute of Óðinn, so this is all quite logical. But both the marking and the throwing are variants of dedications to Óðinn and so, of course, is the initiation that no doubt preceded acceptance in the *Männerbünde*, whether these are seen as bands of *berserkir*, *ulfhednar*, or something else. There is no reason to believe that everybody in Valhøll was initiated, since it seems as if the whole enemy army could be dedicated.

Nevertheless, precisely these initiated men, being of course professional warriors, are the proto-examples of Odinic warriors and this is no doubt the reason why they were in focus in legendary narratives from a much later period, in which much has been forgotten and only a vague memory is left. It is obvious that we cannot expect the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century authors of these narratives to have been aware of all the sociological and socio-religious background for these incidents with animal symbolism, initiatory rituals, and so forth. It is up to us to try to reconstruct this background, and although we shall never be able to make these reconstructions perfectly correspond to the reality of the Viking Age and earlier, we should try with the means that are at our disposal.

²⁸ Snorri Sturluson: *Heimskringla. Noregs konunga sögur*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gad, 1911), p. 9 ('he let himself be marked with a spear and assigned to himself all those men who were killed by weapons, and he said he would go to Góðheimr and receive his friends there').

²⁹ *Heimskringla*, p. 9 ('he also let himself be dedicated to Óðinn before he died').

To return to Óðinn, I believe that the warriors who made up a king or chieftain's retinue, together with the king or chieftain himself, made up the basic stock of Valhøll. Whether every man who was killed with weapons was always supposed to go there, or whether this is a late element, can hardly be decided, but my main purpose here has been to show that there was probably a relation between the notions of Valhøll and some rituals of initiation, including the element of marking oneself with a spearhead, or being dedicated to Óðinn by the enemy. However, initiation proper was probably reserved for some elect warriors and their leaders.

There are a couple of traits that are important in connection with the symbolism at work here. It is definitely no coincidence that the recurring feature is a weapon. Firstly, the spear, as mentioned, is an attribute of Óðinn's and, secondly, it kills. Now it does not seem strange that somebody about to die is killed symbolically, but as an element in the initiation complex, we cannot avoid seeing it as an expression of the universal symbolism³⁰ of initiation, namely the one comprising death and resurrection.³¹ As is well known, Óðinn himself was pierced with a spear when he was hanging on the world tree (*Háv* 138), and King Víkarr is sacrificed to him by being stabbed as well (*Gautreks saga* ch. 7).³² This makes it likely that killing with a spear (and/or by strangling) is related to the cult of Óðinn on the symbolic level, whether we are talking about sacrifices or initiations.³³ It can thus be argued that the very presence of the spear in these situations binds together the cult of Óðinn and admission to Valhøll.

To summarize so far, we can postulate that those who venerated Óðinn were those who were initiated (in a more or less spectacular way) to the god. And they were those who could expect to go to Valhøll after their death. This means that

³⁰ 'Universal' not in the sense that it occurs in all initiation rituals, but that it is found in all parts of the world, and as such must be a symbol which is not specific to particular cultures.

³¹ Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*, trans. by W. Trask (New York: Harper, 1965).

³² In Saxo's version (*Gesta Danorum*, VI, v, 7), the weapon is a sword; in general the saga seems the most coherent representation of the symbolism associated with Óðinn.

³³ I have discussed the relation between these two important ritual phenomena in a previous article, 'The Relation Between the Two Phenomenological Categories Initiation and Sacrifice as Exemplified by the Norse Myth of Óðinn on the Tree', in *The Problem of Ritual*, ed. by T. Ahlbäck (Åbo: Donner Institute, 1993), pp. 261–74. In short, we can say that there are always some characteristics of an initiation which can also be found in most sacrifices, and I would not hesitate to claim that the two phenomena are related symbolically or structurally (see also my forthcoming book, *Initiation Between Two Worlds*).

being initiated to Óðinn was also a way of securing an ideal life in the beyond. Being initiated, however, always means also acquiring some kind of numinous knowledge and mental skills, and the god who is best suited to provide those is definitely Óðinn.

Conclusion

As I have argued before, although Óðinn seems to be a very complicated god, it is possible to see him as a consistent figure who combines a lot of different functions, and who does so in a way that makes perfect sense according to an inherent logic in the pagan world view.³⁴ The idea is that no matter what kind of function Óðinn is related to, whether cultic — as we glimpse in Adam of Bremen — or mythic, it is always through his mental abilities that he succeeds. This means that he is characterized by his possession of a thorough knowledge. Óðinn is the god who *knows*. He knows because he acquires knowledge from the dead, from the underworld, and from further representatives of *the other* — that is, knowledge from another dimension. And eventually, he is able to pass this knowledge on to his chosen men.

From the phenomenology of religion we know that this sort of numinous knowledge is most often transmitted during initiation rituals, so that the initiated are the only individuals who have this special knowledge. Initiation rituals must thus have an aura of exclusivity, distinguishing those who are initiated from those who are not. Of course initiation will always imply advantages for those who are initiated. These advantages may be of a social, a psychological, or a religious nature, but it has always something to do with the relation between this world and the other world, or between the individual and a deity. In this instance the relation is between the individuals who in one way or the other are marked to Óðinn and the god himself. The advantages obtained by the individual have to do with the life in both this world and the other world: in this world the warrior (or the king) gains intellectual (strategic) as well as emotional strength, and in the other world he lives the ideal life of a warrior. In conclusion, then, there seems to be no doubt that, although Óðinn has a wide range of intellectual or mental skills, including magic, poetic, and other abilities, he was first and foremost venerated

³⁴ Jens Peter Schjødt, 'Odins viden – dens funktion og betydning', *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift*, 44 (2004), 43–56.

by kings who were responsible for the general welfare of the land and by the warriors who protected the king.

We do not know very much about how he was venerated, but the main ritual that defines Óðinn in relation to those who were his chosen men, who would join him in Valhöll, was no doubt a kind of initiation ritual — a ritual which probably included a wide range of different acts. Many of these acts are absent in our sources, but at least two rites must have been there, namely the ritual death symbolized by killing with a spear and the acquisition of numinous knowledge. Also a symbolic fight with a bear (probably in the form of a *berserkr*) is likely to have been an element of the ritual. Óðinn was certainly the god of the elite, as has been proposed many times before.³⁵ This is probably the reason why he does not seem to have been venerated in Iceland in any significant measure. But the Eddas and Snorri knew that in his Scandinavian past he was the king of gods and the god of kings.

³⁵ See for example Gabriel Turville-Petre, 'The Cult of Óðinn in Iceland', in his *Nine Norse Studies*, Viking Society Text Series, 5 (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1972), pp. 1–19.

MYTH AND RITUAL IN THE *HÁLEYGJATAL* OF EYVINDR SKÁLDASPILLIR

Russell Poole

A few centuries before the ‘Viking Age’ some Germanic-language-bearing inhabitants of southern Norway moved northwards, establishing settlements along the west coast and offshore islands. A series of well-known *lausavísur* ascribed to Eyvindr skáldaspillir, a poet and local magnate based on one of these islands, speaks of adoptions of livelihood and culture from the contiguous aboriginal peoples, the Sami, in times of adversity.¹ Meanwhile, a poem traditionally entitled *Háleygjatal* and uniformly ascribed to the same Eyvindr in our sources witnesses to some aspects of myth and ritual in the evolving regional culture.

Composed about 985 C.E., *Háleygjatal* enumerates the ancestors of Earl Hákon Sigurðarson. This kindred formed the celebrated Hlaðajarlaætt, which, alongside the Ynglingaætt, ranked as the most powerful ruling family in Norway in the Viking era. For considerable tracts of time the earls enjoyed virtual kingship or overlordship over much of the coastal areas in the north of Norway. The title *Háleygjatal* is significant, insofar as it registers that the family traced its origins to Hálogaland (modern Norwegian Hålogaland), whereas the historical members of

¹ Magnus Olsen, ‘Skaldevers om nøds-år nordenfjells’, *Studia septentrionalia*, 2 (*Festskrift til Konrad Nielsen*) (1945), 176–92. Some of the ideas contained in this essay were presented in a paper given at the skaldic editing colloquium at the University of Copenhagen in June 2004 towards the projected *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages: A New Edition*. Thanks are due to the honorand of this volume, to Guðrún Nordal, and to the other members of the editorial committee for enabling me to participate in this event, as also to the University of Western Ontario. Above and beyond that immediate occasion, I am greatly indebted to Prof. Clunies Ross for many acts of generosity and hospitality and I salute her leadership in the development of Old Norse-Icelandic studies ‘down-under’, as elsewhere in the world.

the dynasty had their seat further south, at Hlaðir (modern Norwegian Lade).² The dynasty became celebrated, both positively and negatively, for its reaction against Christianity and its advocacy of the ancestral, 'heiðinn' religion in the late tenth and early eleventh century.

When we say 'alongside the Ynglingaætt', we immediately invoke an important factor concerning Eyvindr's poem. *Háleygjatal* is a counterpart to *Ynglingatal*, a genealogical poem by Þjóðólfr ór Hvini. Each kindred has a poem to celebrate its lineage, but notoriously Eyvindr's poem is a 'spin-off' from Þjóðólfr's, and Eyvindr's very nickname is most commonly interpreted as 'plagiarist', literally 'despoiler of skalds'. Focussing on rulers, making exceptional claims concerning their descent from the gods,³ and describing the circumstances in which they met their deaths, *Háleygjatal* clearly emulates *Ynglingatal* in subject-matter. It equally clearly emulates the list or 'catenulate' structure of *Ynglingatal*. Eyvindr further follows Þjóðólfr in formal respects by using the very compressed verse-form known as *kviðuháttir*, with its distinctive stylistic features.

The text of *Háleygjatal* is much less fully preserved than *Ynglingatal*, numbering around twelve or thirteen extant stanzas, depending how we count them, as contrasted with the thirty-seven or thirty-eight conventionally assigned to *Ynglingatal*. Using a genealogy cited by Thormod Torfæus, which he probably transcribed from a manuscript of c. 1300, it is possible to reconstruct a Hlaðajarl dynasty of twenty-seven generations, the same number as we find in *Ynglingatal*. The earls are named as follows:⁴ (1) Sæmingus, (2) Godhialtus, (3) Sverdhialtus, (4) Hodbroddus, (5) Himinleigus, (6) Vedrhallus, (7) Havar Manufortis, (8) Godgestus, (9) Heimgestus Huldrefrater, (10) Gylaugus, (11) Gudlaugus, (12) Mundill Senex, (13) Herser, (14) Brandus Comes, (15) Brynjolfus, (16) Bardus, (17) Hergils, (18) Havar, (19) Haraldus Trygill, (20) Throndus, (21) Haraldus, (22) Herlaugus, (23) Herlaugus, (24) Griotgardus, (25) Hacon Hladajarl, (26) Sigurdus, (27) Hacon rikus. We can correlate stanzas from the

² For the early history and attestations of the name *Hlaðir*, see Magnus Olsen, 'Eldste forekomst av navnet Hlaðir (*Vellekla* str. 14)', *Maal og Minne* (1942), 154–56.

³ Edith Marold, 'Die Skaldendichtung als Quelle der Religionsgeschichte', in *Germanische Religionsgeschichte: Quellen und Quellenprobleme*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Detlev Ellmers, and Kurt Schier, *Ergänzungsbände zum Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, 5 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1992), pp. 685–719 (p. 699).

⁴ Thormod Torfæus [= Þormóður Torfason], *Historia rerum Norvegicarum* [. . .], 4 vols (Copenhagen: Schmitgenii, 1711), I, 146.

surviving fragments of *Háleygjatal* with the names in this genealogy as follows:⁵ vv. 3–4, Sæmingus?; v. 5, unknown; vv. 6–7, Gudlaugus; v. 8, unknown; vv. 9–10, Hacon son of Griotgardus; vv. 11–12, Sigurdus; vv. 13–15, Hacon rikus. The remaining three verses of the poem (vv. 1–2 and 16) represent the exordium and conclusion — or parts of them — respectively. If Eyvindr really did include all twenty-seven earls then clearly the bulk of his poem has been lost.

Nonetheless, the extant verses have much to offer us. Eyvindr appears to have known variants of myths that were not widely disseminated outside Hálogaland even in medieval times. Likewise, some of his admittedly allusive references to ritual or cultic practices appear to offer valuable supplementation of our information from other sources. For instance, it has long been recognized that v. 15 alludes to the ritual marriage of ruler to land: to make the most of allusions like this is important because despite testimony of diverse kinds contained in the skaldic and eddaic corpora, the treatise *Snorra Edda*, and the *Gesta Danorum* of Saxo Grammaticus, our knowledge is still remarkably patchy.⁶ As Margaret Clunies Ross has observed, there is in particular a ‘relative paucity’ of information about the ‘rituals that may have been associated with at least some myths and are likely to have been central to the practice of religion as well as other forms of human behaviour in medieval Scandinavia’.⁷ One reason that very little detailed information about pre-Christian Norse rituals has survived, she suggests, is that

⁵ Here and throughout the enumeration of verses follows that established by Finnur Jónsson in *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, AI–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), BI–II (Rettet tekst) (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15).

⁶ Olof Sundqvist, ‘Sagas, Religion, and Rulership: The Credibility of the Description of Rituals in *Hákonar saga góða*’, *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 1 (2005), 225–50 (pp. 225–27). For the ‘hieros gamos’ of ruler and land, see Axel Åkerblom, ‘Bidrag till tolkningen af skaldekvad’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 15 (1899), 269–73 (pp. 271–72); Roberta Frank, *Old Norse Court Poetry: The Dróttkvætt Stanza* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), pp. 63–65; Gro Steinsland, ‘Giants as Recipients of Cult in the Viking Age?’, in *Words and Objects: Towards a Dialogue between Archaeology and History of Religion*, ed. by Gro Steinsland (Oslo: Norwegian University Press, Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning, 1986), pp. 212–22; Gro Steinsland, *Det hellige bryllup og norrøn kongeideologi: En analyse av hierogamimyten i Skírnismál, Ynglingatal, Háleygjatal og Hyndluljóð* (Oslo: Solum, 1991); Gro Steinsland, ‘Die mythologische Grundlage für die nordische Königsideologie’, in *Germanische Religionsgeschichte*, ed. by Beck, Ellmers, and Schier, pp. 736–51; Folke Ström, ‘Hieros gamos-motivet i Hallfreðr Óttarsons *Hákonardrápa* och den nordnorska jarlavärdigheten’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 98 (1983), 67–79.

⁷ Margaret Clunies Ross, ‘Two Old Icelandic Theories of Ritual’, in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2003), pp. 279–99 (p. 279).

the practices themselves probably ceased at the time of the conversion to Christianity or shortly afterwards.⁸ That would probably be true by and large of official practices, the natural subject of the traditions associated with the sagas of kings.⁹ On the other hand, unofficial and local rituals could have been sustained much longer, as is indicated by some local traditions from Norway, Iceland, and Gotland, among other locations.¹⁰

To pursue this search for myth and ritual in Eyvindr's verses it is necessary to tackle a series of passages that are highly obscure, perhaps even wilfully so on the poet's part. Headway can be made in solving at least some of the mysteries if we bear in mind that Eyvindr exhibits a fondness for *ofljóst* and for a certain elasticity in anaphora (the connection of defining phrases back to referents). To judge from the variant readings in manuscripts and from the commentaries in prose compilations, such features may have caused trouble from early in the processes of reception and transmission, perhaps already by the time of Snorri Sturluson.

I shall first take up for discussion the verses customarily numbered 1 and 2, which, as noted above, appear to form part of the *upphaf* of the poem. The text is as follows:

[v. 1] Viljak hljóð
at Háars líði,
meðan Gillings
gjöldum yppik,
meðan hans ætt
í hverlegi
galga farms
til goða teljum,

⁸ Margaret Clunies Ross, 'Närvaron och frånvaron av ritual i norröna medeltida texter', in *Plats och praxis: Arkeologiska och religionshistoriska studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*, ed. by Kristina Jennbert, Anders Andrén, and Catharina Raudvere, Vågar till Midgård, 2 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2002), pp. 13–30 (p. 18); Clunies Ross, 'Theories of Ritual', p. 282, n. 4.

⁹ Though compare Olav Bø, *Heilag-Olav i norsk folktradisjon* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1955), pp. 62 and 64; Vilhelm Grønbech, *Hellighed og Helligdom: Vor Folkeet i Oldtiden*, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Pio, 1911–12), I, 144–45.

¹⁰ Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, 'Blot i forna skrifter', *Scripta Islandica*, 47 (1996), 11–32 (p. 14); Gunhild Kværness, *Blote kan ein gjere om det berre skjer i løynd: Kristenrettane i Gulatingslova og Grágás og forholdet mellom dei*, KULTs skriftserie, 65 (Oslo: KULT, 1996); Richard Perkins, *Thor the Wind-raiser and the Eyrarland Image* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2001); Sundqvist, 'Sagas, Religion, and Rulership', pp. 234–36.

[v. 2] hinn es Surts
 ór sökddolum
 farmognuðr
 fljúgandi bar.¹¹

(I wish for silence at my poem [Óðinn's drink] as I raise my verses [payment of Gilligr], while I enumerate his lineage back to the gods in the poem [cauldron-lake of the burden of the gallows > Óðinn], [v. 2] which the furtherer of travel bore flying from the ?treasure/sunken?-valleys of Surtr.)

In the manuscripts of *Skáldskaparmál*, where both verses are uniquely attested, v. 2 occurs separately from v. 1 (and indeed at an earlier point in Snorri's exposition). Neither fragment is identified there as belonging to *Háleygjatal*. The traditional assumption among scholars, that both stem from that poem, seems, however, to be perfectly reasonable,¹² and furthermore the two fragments were evidently composed to be recited in uninterrupted succession. As to syntax, v. 2 consists of a relative clause, with a masculine antecedent. The demonstrative pronoun 'hinn' attached to the relative particle 'es' is apparently in the accusative case — since the subject of the clause is 'farmognuðr' — and refers back straightforwardly to 'hverlegi' in v. 1, which of course is also masculine (from nominative *lęgr*). The syntactic connection between vv. 1 and 2 is in such an analysis unproblematic. As to verse-form, when twelve-line stanzas demonstrably occur at least once in *Háleygjatal* and abundantly in *Ynglingatal*, there is no intrinsic implausibility about a stringing together of three *helmingar* such as we are positing here.

In thinking about the mythic aspects of the content, we can start with the periphrasis 'farmognuðr', which literally means 'travel-strengthened'. This compound is a sufficient kenning for Óðinn without further defining element. In explaining it, Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson emphasize the idea of Óðinn's general propensity for travel, Mercury-like.¹³ Later scholars, among them Rudolf Meissner,

¹¹ Here and henceforth, all texts and translations are my own unless otherwise stated. Texts are from the following manuscripts: R = GKS 2367 4^o; W = AM 242 fol; U = Uppsala DG 11. Compare Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes, 2 vols (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), vv. 33/40 and 23 respectively; *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AI, 68, BI, 60. Substantive variants are: v. 1, line 1, 'hljóð' (R) for 'hljóð'; v. 1, line 5, 'þvíat' (W) for 'meðan'; v. 1, line 7, 'grams' (U) for 'farms'.

¹² *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Faulkes, I, 160.

¹³ Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis* (Copenhagen: Qvist, for Societas regia antiquariorum septentrionalium, 1860), s.v. *farmagnadr*; *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Möller, 1931; repr. Copenhagen: Atlas, 1966), s.v. *farmagnadr*.

preferred to emphasize Óðinn's specific feat of winged travel.¹⁴ In supporting Meissner and casting doubt upon Sveinbjörn and Finnur, Arnulf Krause notes that positing the generalized attribute of 'travel' involves the assumption of a continuous tradition from the time when the *interpretatio romana* identifying Óðinn with Mercury was formulated.¹⁵ This equation in itself is described by Einar Haugen as 'puzzling', when a more obvious counterpart might have been Jupiter, but he goes on to point out detailed correspondences between Óðinn and Mercury's Greek counterpart, Hermes. Hermes protects travellers and roads; Óðinn makes many journeys to visit gods, giants, and men, both to gain and to give wisdom, and he disguises himself with names that mean 'traveller'. Hermes is depicted with a staff, a sceptre, or a wand; Óðinn often travels with a shepherd's staff.¹⁶ If Hermes is a wandering god, then Óðinn for his part undertakes migrations and undergoes exile.¹⁷

In trying to decide how firmly based the equation is and what continuity Germanic conceptions of *Wōðanaz had onwards into Viking-Age conceptions of Óðinn, we should put considerable weight upon 'farmǫgnuðr' and also look carefully at another kenning for the god used by Eyvindr in this poem, 'farma-Týs' (v. 11). This is a periphrasis with potential for multiple associations. One is with the load of poetic mead carried by Óðinn.¹⁸ Another is with the load that Óðinn himself constituted, when hanging from the gallows (an idea established in v. 1, with the kenning 'galga farms'). The primary denotation, however, remains literal cargoes, with Óðinn envisaged in his capacity of a god of voyages and trade.¹⁹

As noted, some of Óðinn's numerous names relate to journeys, for instance 'Vegtamr', a pseudonym that he adopts with reference to his strenuous journey to visit Hel, recounted in *Baldurs draumar*. In *Vafþrúðnismál* there appears to be a calculated emphasis on the word 'fara' ('to travel'). In v. 1 Óðinn speaks as follows: 'Ráð þú mér nú, Frigg, | alls mik fara tíðir | at vitja Vafþrúðnis' ('Advise me

¹⁴ Rudolf Meissner, *Die Kenningar der Skalden: Ein Beitrag zur skaldischen Poetik* (Bonn: Schroeder, 1921), p. 322.

¹⁵ Arnulf Krause, *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr Skaldaspillir: Edition, Kommentar, Untersuchungen*, Altnordische Bibliothek, 10 (Leverkusen: Reinhardt, 1990), pp. 143 and 182.

¹⁶ Einar Haugen, 'The Edda as Ritual: Odin and his Masks', in *Edda: A Collection of Essays*, ed. by R. Glendinning and Haraldur Bessason, University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies, 4 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983), pp. 3–24 (pp. 8–9).

¹⁷ Rudolf Simek, *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*, trans. Angela Hall (Cambridge: Brewer, 1993), pp. 246–47.

¹⁸ Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v. *farmatýr*.

¹⁹ Compare Krause, *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, p. 182.

now, Frigg, since it is my wish to go to visit Vafþrúðnir'). In v. 3 Óðinn looks back on previous expeditions: 'Fjöld ek fór' ('I have travelled a great deal'). In v. 4 Frigg expresses good wishes for the journey: 'Heill þú farir, | heill þú aprtr komir, | heill þú á sinnum sér' ('Well you go, well you come back again, well may you be on your travels'). Similarly in v. 5, 'Fór þá Óðinn' ('then went Óðinn'), v. 8, 'hefi ek lengi farit' ('I have travelled a long way'), and v. 9, where the giant appropriately invites him to take a seat: 'farðu í sess í sal' ('go to a seat in the hall').²⁰ To round off our examples of the association between Óðinn and travel, in *Völsunga saga* ch. 17, for instance, we are told that Sigurðr has to put up with a tempestuous voyage until he sees a man on a headland and takes him on board. The man identifies himself in a verse as Hnikarr, Fengr, and Fjólnir, in other words as Óðinn. After his embarkation the wind subsides and the voyage is trouble free.

All in all, it would seem that *Háleygjatal* preserves an ancient conception of Óðinn when it speaks of him as presiding over journeys, not least his own. In vv. 1 and 2 the specific journey described is the theft of the poetic mead, and here Eyvindr's poem exhibits some marked peculiarities. In the familiar version of the story, told in *Skáldskaparmál*, the giant who has kept the mead safely concealed is identified as Suttungr.²¹ Eyvindr's use of the name 'Surts', when we might expect 'Suttungs', and its apparent association with certain 'sökkðolum', comes as a surprise and most scholars have tried to rationalize this reference away. Sveinbjörn Egilsson and Finnur Jónsson, followed by Anthony Faulkes, suggest that 'Surtr' must be used as a common noun to refer to Suttungr. Sveinbjörn gives the following gloss for 'sökkðalir': 'valles depressæ [...] "s. Surts" [...], valles et antra, in quibus Suttungus, mulsi poetici possessor et custos, habitavit' ('deep valleys [...], "sökkðalir" Surts', [...] valleys and caves, in which Suttungr, protector and guardian of the poetic mead, lived').²² Finnur translates v. 2 as follows: 'Den, som den kraftige rejsende (Odin) flyvende førte bort fra jættens daldyb' ('that which the powerful traveller (Óðinn) bore in flight away from the valley-depths of the giant').²³ In his Glossary to *Skáldskaparmál*, s.v. *sökkðalir*, Faulkes glosses as 'deep (sunken) dales', noting 'Surts s.' as the sole example, and explains that these 'dales'

²⁰ All citations from *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 4th edn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962), pp. 45–55; my normalizations.

²¹ *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Faulkes, I, 160; cf. pp. 4–5.

²² Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v.

²³ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BI, 60; cf. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, s.v.

refer to a location ‘underneath the mountains’.²⁴ In his translation of *Snorra Edda* Faulkes states more explicitly that ‘Surt’s deep vales are the depths of the mountains (Hnitbiorg), and here Surt is used as a common noun for “giant”’.²⁵ But, despite this glossarial sleight of hand on the part of a series of scholars, caves and valleys can scarcely be the same thing.

The suggestion registered above that the name ‘Surtr’ could function as a common noun is not borne out by the attestations²⁶ and is moreover inherently implausible, since Surtr was in fact extremely distinctive and individual, as giants go, being a fearsome fire-giant and player of a key role in Ragnarøk. *Völuspá* describes him arriving with a sword of fire and bringing the gods face to face with their fate. Of them, it is Freyr, missing his sword (if we believe *Lokasenna*), who fights with Surtr.²⁷ On this basis I would suggest that Surtr, as invoked by Eyvindr in *Háleygjatal*, is no mere token giant but is meaningfully linked with mentions of Freyr later in the poem. Krause has suggested that in early versions of the poetic mead story Surtr filled the role later taken by Suttungr; that would fit with the fact that Hallfreðr, who has a Hálógaland ancestral background and associations in his early career with Hákon jarl,²⁸ calls poetry ‘Surts ættar sylgr’, ‘the drink of Surtr’s kindred’, in his *Erfridrápa* for Óláfr Tryggvason.²⁹

Faulkes also suggests an alternative interpretation where the word ‘Surts’ may be part of a kenning for the mead of poetry rather than dependent on *sökkdǫlum*.³⁰ But that seems forced syntactically because ‘Surts’ would have to refer outside the phrase in a way that occurs sporadically in *dróttkvætt* but is not exemplified for *kviðuháttir*.³¹ The ‘sökkdalir’ can perfectly well belong to Surtr and this linkage

²⁴ Here following Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, s.v. *Surtr*.

²⁵ *Edda. Snorri Sturluson*, trans. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Dent, 1987), p. 254.

²⁶ Compare Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, s.v. *Surtr*; the *þula* cited in support (IV B4) consists entirely of proper names.

²⁷ E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1964), pp. 38 and 281.

²⁸ Russell Poole, ‘The “Conversion Verses” of Hallfreðr vandræðaskáld’, *Maal og Minne* (2002), 43–65 (p. 15).

²⁹ *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, pp. 142–43.

³⁰ *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Faulkes, I, 160.

³¹ Compare the remarks by Erik Noreen, *Studier i fornvästnordisk diktning* (Uppsala: A.-b. Akademiska bokhandeln, 1921–23), on the importance of recognizing styles specific to the different skaldic verse-forms. I am also indebted to Kari Ellen Gade for her presentation on this topic at the skaldic editing colloquium held in Kiel in August 2003.

probably has a special significance. In Iceland Surtr is associated not merely with fire but also with sunken landforms of a kind, namely lava tubes or caves.³² In Norway he has associations with sunken features of a different kind, if we can trust late sources. In *Ketils saga hængs* Ketill finds large pits ('miklar grafir') with salted human flesh and other meat buried in them, and these turn out to belong to Surtr.³³ Hermann Pálsson, who cites this passage, points out that in Sami folktales giants are eaters of men³⁴ — as indeed is the etymological basis of the word 'jǫtunn/eoten'.³⁵ But perhaps Surtr's 'dalir' were of a different kind: the alternative is to identify 'sökk' in *Háleygjatal* with a rare word for 'precious stone, treasure' (cognate with OE *sinc*), used once elsewhere by Eyvindr.³⁶ Although the details remain obscure, the general conclusion is clear that Eyvindr's mythology did not precisely tally with Snorri's.

We can now turn to verses 3–4.

[v. 3] Þann skjaldblœtr
 skattfæri gat
 ása niðr
 við jarnviðju;
 þás þau mæ
 í manheimum
 skatna vinr
 ok Skaði byggðu

 [v. 4] sævar beins,
 ok sunu marga
 ǫndurdís
 við Óðni gat.³⁷

³² Bertha Phillpotts, 'Surt', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 21 (1905), 14–30.

³³ *Fornaldar sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by Guðni Jónsson, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Íslendingasagnauktgáfan, 1950), II, 155–56.

³⁴ Hermann Pálsson, *Úr landnordri: Samar og ystu rætur íslenskrar menningar* (Reykjavík: Bókmenntafræðistofnun Háskóla Íslands, 1997), pp. 38–39.

³⁵ Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 3rd edn (Leiden: Brill, 1977), s.v. *jǫtunn*.

³⁶ E. A. Kock, *Notationes norrœne: anteckningar till Edda och skaldediktning* (Lund: Gleerup, 1923–44), §1783B.

³⁷ Uniquely attested in *Ynglinga saga*. Editions are included in *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AI, 68, BI, 60; [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslensk fornrit, 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), I, 21–22. Substantive variants include: v. 3, line 1: 'skaldblœtr' (*Frissbók*) for 'skjaldblœtr'; v. 3, line 5: 'meirr' (*Frissbók*) for 'mæ'.

(The descendant of the Æsir, shield-worshipped, begat the earl [bringer of tribute = Sæmingr?] with the giantess [denizen of Ironwood], when that renowned couple — the friend of men and Skaði — dwelt in Jǫtunheimar [the home of the maid / [v. 4] of the stone < ‘bone of the sea’]; and Skaði [the lady of the ski] had many sons with Óðinn.)

In *Ynglinga saga*, where these two fragments are uniquely attested, they occur in combination, without intercalated prose. A through-composed twelve-line stanza is something we might expect from our analysis of vv. 1 and 2, and the twelve lines appear to read fluently as one unit, focusing on Óðinn, Skaði, and their male offspring. We note that the son of Óðinn and Skaði who comes to life in the circumstances described in the verses is not identified there. As we have seen, however, the genealogy cited by Torfaeus lists first among Hákon’s forebears an earl called Sæmingr, and Snorri agrees with this, commenting ‘Til Sæmings talði Hákon jarl inn ríki langfæðgakyn sitt’³⁸ (‘Hákon jarl inn ríki reckoned his patrilineage back to Sæmingr’).

Influential for all subsequent analysis has been Snorri’s commentary on ‘Mannheimar’ in *Ynglinga saga*, placed immediately after the verses: ‘Þessa Svíþjóð kǫlluðu þeir Mannheima, en ina miklu Svíþjóð kǫlluðu þeir Goðheima. Ór Goðheimum sǫgðu þeir mǫrg tíðendi’³⁹ (‘They called this Sweden “Mannheimar”, and Sweden the Great they called “Goðheimar”. From Goðheimar they told of many events’). As Eggert Ó. Brím observes, Snorri construes ‘Mannheimar’ in both prose and verse (despite the spelling with single *-n-* in the latter) as contrasting with ‘Goðheimar’, in each case designating the type of inhabitant to be found there — in parallel with ‘Álfheimar’ and ‘Svartálfaheimr’.⁴⁰

The only other poetic attestation of ‘Manheimar’ occurs in the verses from *Hjálmpérs saga*, evidently a thirteenth-century text: ‘Hverr er sá karla | kominn ór Manheimum, | ungr at aldri | oss at kveðja?’⁴¹ (‘Who is this for a man, come from “Manheimar”, young in age, to greet us?’). Possibly the name ‘Manheimar’ is used here to allude to the fact that Hjálmpér and his companions have just been visiting Hervör, a *man*, ‘maiden’. ‘Mannheimar’ (with double *-nn-*) apparently does not occur in poetry. Nevertheless, Sveinbjörn Egilsson writes *Mannheim-*, glossing ‘sedes Mannorum’, ‘seat of the *Manni*’.⁴² As to prose sources, various

³⁸ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 22.

³⁹ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 22.

⁴⁰ Eggert Ó. Brím (Briem), ‘Bemærkninger angående en del vers i “Noregs konunga sögur” I’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 11 (1895), 1–32 (p. 5); cf. *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 21.

⁴¹ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 359, v. 8.

⁴² Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v. *Mannheimar*.

redactions of *Heiðreks saga* mention Mannheimar. We learn that before the Turks and Asians migrated northwards, certain giants and half-giants who had settled in a region called 'Jötunheimar' took women from Mannheimar or married their daughters off to inhabitants of Mannheimar.⁴³

Brím contends that in presupposing a contrastive 'Mannheimar' and 'Goðheimar' Snorri was most probably misunderstanding Eyvindr's verse. Likelier, in Brím's estimation, is that Óðinn made Skaði's acquaintance in Jötunheimar and that Sæmingr was born and raised there and later conquered nearby Hálogaland, where his kindred subsequently established themselves. Brím argues for an original meaning of 'manheimar' as 'home of love', with the corollary that Eyvindr's 'byggja í manheimum' should be understood as 'enjoy the pleasure of love'.⁴⁴ But this is to build on the erroneous assumption that *man* means 'love'; Finnur Jónsson found the figurative interpretation forced and unidiomatic.⁴⁵

In defending Snorri's interpretation, Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson notes that Eyvindr's 'Manheimum' is spelt with single *-n-* in all manuscripts, but interprets it as a mere variant on double *-nn-*, comparing 'man[n]vit'.⁴⁶ Faulkes also supports Snorri, suggesting that his understanding of 'í Manheimum' fits with his programmatically euhemeristic view of the gods.⁴⁷ Krause proposes as part of this euhemerism that Manheimar is equivalent to Miðgarðr, being an abode of men where the god and the giant can propagate so to speak on neutral ground.⁴⁸ Gro Steinsland is on similar lines when she explains 'í Manheimum' as the trysting place for Óðinn and Skaði and as parallel in function to the forest clearing called 'barri' in *Skírnismál*.⁴⁹

Meanwhile the phrase 'sævar beins' has to be taken into account, as the other problematic element in these verses. The kenning type 'sævar beins' is used twice in Eyvindr's prototype, *Ynglingatal* vv. 26 and 31,⁵⁰ and there is no doubt that it equates to words such as 'stone' or 'rock' or even 'mountain'.⁵¹ Finnur Jónsson, in

⁴³ Hermann Pálsson, *Úr landnordri*, p. 37.

⁴⁴ Brím, 'Bemærkninger', p. 5.

⁴⁵ Snorri Sturluson, *Ynglingasaga*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gad, 1912), p. 55.

⁴⁶ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 21; cf. Hermann Pálsson, *Úr landnordri*, p. 155.

⁴⁷ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda. Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), p. 98.

⁴⁸ *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, p. 149.

⁴⁹ Steinsland, *Det hellige bryllup*, p. 216.

⁵⁰ Krause, *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, p. 153.

⁵¹ So already Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v. *bein*.

his edition of *Heimskringla*, places a full stop after ‘byggðu’ and prints ‘Sævar’, with capital ‘s’;⁵² in some additional notes he remarks that the phrase ‘står isoleret’ (‘stands isolated’).⁵³ In *Skjaldedigtning* he offers the following translation of vv. 3 and 4: ‘Den skattebringer (jarl) avlede asernes ætling, dyrket af skjalde, med jættekvinden, da de, mændenes ven og Skade, fremdeles bode i Manheim . . . søbenets (stenens), og skigudinden (Skade) fik mange sønner med Odin’⁵⁴ (‘The descendant of the Æsir produced the bringer of tribute (the earl), venerated by the skalds, with a giant woman, when they, the friend of men and Skaði, lived on in Manheim . . . of the sea-bone (stone), and the ski goddess (Skaði) had many sons with Óðinn’) (Finnur’s ellipsis).

But, despite Finnur’s talk of ‘isolation’ and the uncharacteristic silence of E. A. Kock in *Notationes Norræne*, the phrase ‘sævar beins’ might perfectly well connect with some other element of vv. 3 or 4. The problem is to decide which one. Björn M. Ólsen suggested that it qualifies ‘ǫndurdís’ so as to clarify that a giantess is referred to, not a bona fide goddess.⁵⁵ But, as noted already by Finnur, ‘ǫndurdís’ signifies Skaði and needs no further defining element.⁵⁶ Additionally, in *Haustlǫng* v. 7 the giant Þjazi is called the ‘fóstri Ǫndurgoðs’, showing that Skaði could on occasion be regarded as a god; Krause suggests that Skaði’s status may have fluctuated between gianthood and godhead.⁵⁷ A different solution is proposed by Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir and her collaborators in their *Heimskringla* edition: ‘Ǫndurdís (Skaði) gat og marga sævar beins sonu (e.t.v. menn af jötnaættum) við Óðni’⁵⁸ (‘The ski-goddess (Skaði) also had many sons of the rock (perhaps “men of giant kindreds”) with Óðinn’). The posited ‘sævar beins synir’ is compared with expressions for giants such as ‘landherðar’ and ‘hraundrengr’, but the comparison is flawed, since *synir* is a kinship term and the other basewords are not.

⁵² *Heimskringla: Nóregs konunga sögur af Snorri Sturluson*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 23, 4 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1893–1900), I, 21.

⁵³ *Ynglingasaga*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 55.

⁵⁴ *Skjaldedigtning*, BI, 60.

⁵⁵ Björn M. Ólsen, ‘Strøbemærkninger til norske og islandske skjaldedigte’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 18 (1902), 195–210 (p. 198); cf. Bruno Sjöros, *Til tolkningen av Ynglingasagans visor* (Helsingfors: Studier i nordisk filologi, 1911).

⁵⁶ *Ynglingasaga*, p. 55.

⁵⁷ *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, p. 154.

⁵⁸ [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bergljót S. Kristjánsdóttir, Bragi Halldórsson, Jón Torfason, and Örnólfur Thorsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1991), I, 12–13.

The alternative I favour is to link ‘sævar beins’ with the problematic ‘Manheimum’, focussing on the first element in that compound, ‘man’. Combined in this way, the words ‘sævar beins’ and ‘man’ yield a kenning for ‘giantess’. According to Meissner, giantesses are normally referred to in kennings following the template ‘womenfolk of the nation of the mountains, i.e., giants’,⁵⁹ but two directly comparable kennings occur in the skaldic corpus, at least as currently edited. In Eilífr Goðrúnarson’s *Þórsdrápa*, Finnur interprets ‘hellis sprundi’ as ‘giantess’.⁶⁰ In Haukr Valdísarson’s *Íslendingadrápa* Finnur interprets ‘hamra vífs’ as ‘giantess’.⁶¹ It follows that ‘sævar beins man’ can also mean ‘giantess’ and the ‘home’ of the giantess would be *Jötunheimar*. Such an interpretation would fit with the known use of *ofljóst* in v. 10 of this poem, where Grjótagarðr is referred to as Hallgarðr — and once again the *ofljóst* builds upon *heiti* for ‘stone, rock’, not an unnatural concept to select for elaboration in a poem that celebrates the illustrious dead.

My proposed arrangement of elements in vv. 3–4 takes a distinctive form, where the element ‘sævar beins’ is placed at the beginning of a *helmingr* and follows three lines after its baseword, which is placed in the second line of the previous *helmingr*. Such a pattern is closely matched in v. 11 by the postponement of the element ‘farma-Týs’, defining ‘svǫnum’; while it is possible that ‘Haddingja vals’ might qualify ‘svǫnum’ instead, that would involve assuming an *entrelacement* of two different kennings, unlikely in *kviðuháttir*.⁶²

The readiest way of accounting for the different pieces of evidence is that the name *Mannheimar*, the natural antithesis to *Jötunheimar*, pre-dates both Eyvindr and Snorri, has a place in early Scandinavian mythology, and is therefore not a neologism dependent upon Snorri’s rationalizations and schematizations of mythic material. Eyvindr’s ‘manheimum’ would then represent a paronomasia on this name. In using Eyvindr’s verse Snorri seems to have bypassed the word-play; he could well have interpreted ‘sævar beins’ as an adverbial genitive of place, meaning ‘at the rock’, that is, ‘amid mountains’ (this phrase therefore supplementing ‘í manheimum’, not governing it). Adverbial genitives of place must have been familiar to him, as a relatively popular stylism in late tenth-century poems, notably *Vellekla*, that he cites.⁶³

⁵⁹ *Die Kenningar*, p. 398.

⁶⁰ *Skjaldedigting*, BI, 142, v. 14; cf. Konstantin Reichardt, ‘Die *Þórsdrápa* des Eilífr Goðrúnarson: Textinterpretation’, *PMLA*, 63 (1948), 329–91 (pp. 377–78).

⁶¹ *Skjaldedigting*, BI, 539, v. 2.

⁶² Compare Noreen, *Studier i fornvästnordisk diktning*.

⁶³ Russell Poole, ‘Adverbial Genitives in Skaldic poetry’, *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 14 (2004), 115–31.

The paternity of Sæmingr was the subject of varying traditions. In the Prologue to *Heimskringla* Snorri gives it to Yngvi-Freyr but in *Ynglinga saga*, which likewise is extant as part of *Heimskringla*, he gives it to Óðinn.⁶⁴ His Prologue to the *Edda* agrees with the latter account, as part of a wider schema where Óðinn is shown as settling his various sons to preside over various countries.⁶⁵ The self-contradiction within *Heimskringla* is strange. Snorri mentions *Háleygjatal* in his Prologue without citing it, whereas he incorporates our present two verses into his text of *Ynglinga saga*. The various traditions concerning the mythic (chthonic?) figure Skaði also contain some discrepancies, but I shall not pursue that familiar topic here.

Where ritual is concerned, the adjective *skjaldblaetr* is of interest. The majority reading in the *Heimskringla* paradosis points firmly to the meaning ‘shield-worshipped’, with ‘worshipped by skalds’ (reading of *Frissbók* (AM 45 fol) alone) probably a *lectio facilior*. Clearly, to judge from the *-blaetr* element of the compound, a ritual — no doubt involving sacrifice of some kind — is being referred to. The best documented ritual — which has been extensively canvassed by previous scholars — that fits the requirements is a practice of incantation from under shields, described in *Hávamál* and possibly alluded to in a verse in *Egils saga*.⁶⁶ Perhaps, however, the ritual should instead be envisaged as involving the deposition of a shield, in which case Eyvindr’s poem takes us beyond what we otherwise firmly know from either the literary or the archaeological record, although it is possible that the story of Scyld in *Beowulf*, where a child called by this name is set drifting across the sea (very different from the story of Skioldus in Saxo Grammaticus) preserves a memory of ‘shield-sacrifice’.

Eyvindr’s two extant stanzas on the jarl Sigurðr Hákonarson (vv. 11 and 12) further exemplify the density of allusions to myth and ritual in this poem, though once again account needs to be taken of certain linguistic obscurities.

[v.11] Ok Sigurð,
hinn’s svǫnum veitti

⁶⁴ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 4 and 21 respectively.

⁶⁵ *Gylfaginning*, ed. by Faulkes, p. 6; John Lindow, *Norse Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Heroes, Rituals, and Beliefs* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 264.

⁶⁶ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 21; Ólsen, ‘Strøbemærkninger’, pp. 196–98; Edith Marold, ‘The Relationship between Verses and Prose in Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa’, in *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. by Russell Poole (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 75–124 (p. 96).

hróka bjór
 Haddingja vals
 Farma-týs,
 fǫrvi næmðu
 jarðráðendr
 á Qglói.⁶⁷

(And the rulers of the land deprived Sigurðr, who gave blood [drink of the rook of the carnage of the Haddingjar] to the ravens [the swans of the Týr of cargoes > Óðinn] of life at Qglói.)

[v.12] Ok ǫðlingr
 †í ǫlun jarðar†
 alnar orms
 ófælinn varð
 lífs of lattr,
 þars landrekar
 Týs áttung
 í tryggð sviku.⁶⁸

(And the magnate, unintimidated, was deprived of life in the ?ale-feast? of ?the lady [Earth of the snake of the fore-arm?], where the rulers of the land betrayed him [the kinsman of Týr] in their truce.)

Here the outstanding issue is the line ‘†í ǫlun jarðar†’. In the discussion that follows, I shall make a case that this line contains a reference to an ale-feast and therefore constitutes another of Eyvindr’s allusions to ritual. Hitherto the line has generally been interpreted as a kenning for ‘snake’ (‘the mackerel of the earth’, where *ǫlunn* is ‘mackerel’, or some similar type of fish).

Sveinbjörn Egilsson, glossing *ǫlun* as ‘piscis nescio qui’ (‘some kind of fish’), offers no fewer than three explanations for ‘í ǫlun jarðar’, all of which assume that ‘ǫlun’ is in the dative case.⁶⁹ The first, which he immediately dismisses himself, is as a circumlocution for the place-name Qglói, on the assumption that this name had some connection with *ǫgla* (Danish *øgle*, ‘viper’). The second is that ‘the fish of the land’ > ‘serpent’ > ‘fire’, by some type of *ofljóst*, but he does not cite any specific ‘bridging word’. The third is that the phrase combines with ‘ófælinn’ to

⁶⁷ Editions include Finnur Jónsson’s *Skjaldedigtning*, A1, 69, B1, 61; Bjarni Aðalbarnarson’s *Heimskringla*, I, 207; Faulkes’s *Skáldskaparmál*, I, 7 and 78. There are no substantive variants.

⁶⁸ Editions include Finnur Jónsson’s *Skjaldedigtning*, A1, 69–70, B1, 61–62; Bjarni Aðalbarnarson’s *Heimskringla*, I, 208. Substantive variants include: line 2: ‘ǫlun’ (*Jöfraskinna* 1), ‘jolum’ (*Flatøyjarbók*) for ‘í ǫlun’; line 6: ‘lofðungar’ (*Jöfraskinna* 1) for ‘landrekar’.

⁶⁹ Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v.

mean ‘unafraid in/of water (earth of the mackerel)’. But that involves a compound formation ‘*qlunjrð*’, with deletion of the preposition ‘*i*’, which would be unmetrical. Finnur Jónsson obelizes this line and the next in *Skjaldedigtning*, without further discussion.⁷⁰

Kock’s interpretation of ‘*qlun jarðar*’, construed as ‘mackerel of the earth’, is as an *ofljóst*, meaning ‘fire’; he identifies the bridging word as *linnr*,⁷¹ on which more presently. This fits with the *Begleitprosa*, which states that Sigurðr dies in a fire. The clear case of an *ofljóst*, already noted, in v. 10 of *Háleygjatal* adds support for this explanation, and it is accepted by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, Bjarni Einarsson, and Krause.⁷² The two Icelandic native speakers make an implicit reservation, however, when they draw attention to the awkward presence of the accusative instead of expected dative form of *qlunn* (‘mackerel’), yielding ‘into the fire’ instead of ‘in the fire’, the latter of which is required by the remainder of the predicate ‘*varð lífs of lattr*’ (‘became deprived of life’), though they do not press it as a fatal objection.

To my mind, however, this is one of several objections which in combination add up to fatality for Kock’s interpretation as well as its unacknowledged precursor from Sveinbjörn. Also, Kock is forced to link ‘*alnar orms*’ in line 3 back to ‘*qðlingr*’ in line 1, making the genitive phrase the defining element in a kenning (in the sense of either ‘gulls’ or ‘baugs’). But ‘*qðlingr*’ is not an acceptable baseword for a kenning; Kock’s sole cited parallel, ‘*baugskati*’, is a dubious reading in Egill’s *Hofuðlausn*, ranking as a *lectio faciliior*, amid several variants,⁷³ and can offer no real support.

Moreover, the evidence that *linnr* could be a *heiti* for fire is not particularly convincing, and certainly not conclusive in a situation where other grounds exist for scepticism. Outside the so-called *pulur* the meaning ‘fire’ (or ‘tree’, yet a third denotation claimed for this busy word) is nowhere unambiguously attested. For ‘snake’ the picture is clearer: Jan de Vries can connect *linni*, *linnormr* ‘schlange’ with OHG *lint*, MHG *Lintwurm*.⁷⁴ Given that direct cognates of these words are

⁷⁰ *Skjaldedigtning*, BI, 61.

⁷¹ *Notationes norræna*, §§1056 and 2987A.

⁷² Respectively *Heimskringla*, I, 208; *Ágrip af Noregskonunga sögum. Fagrskinna – Noregskonunga tal*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 29 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1984), pp. 101–02; *Die Dichtung des Eyvindr*, pp. 188–89.

⁷³ Russell Poole, ‘Variants and Variability in the Text of Egill’s *Hofuðlausn*’, in *The Politics of Editing Medieval Texts*, ed. by Roberta Frank (New York: AMS Press, 1993), pp. 65–105 (pp. 71 and 103).

⁷⁴ Compare de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*, s.v.

not attested in Old English or other West Germanic dialects, one might speculate that they occur in common in Old and Middle High German and in Old Icelandic/Norwegian because of some shared narrative matter, perhaps treatments of the Siegfried/Sigurðr story. We note in this context that *linnormr* is uniquely attested in *Þiðreks saga*.⁷⁵ The variant reading *lyngormr* tends to suggest that as early as the Middle Ages this was an unfamiliar word.⁷⁶

In two groups of attestations the meaning 'snake' is undoubted and well documented. The word occurs sporadically outside of kennings, as in 'linna eitr', *Lilja* v. 80; 'lépartar linni bornir', *Merlínússpa* I 48; and 'linns blóði', Sigvatr, *lausavísa* 3. The compound *oflinnr* ('mighty snake'), referring to the ship Ormr hinn langi, occurs in *Rekstefja* v. 22. Additionally, numerous attestations exist where *linnr/linni* is a component in gold kennings, and there too the meaning of 'snake' is essential and undoubted. A third group of skaldic attestations occurs in sword- (or perhaps spear-) kennings in combination with defining words typified by *sára* ('of wounds'), *hildar* ('of battle'), and *skjaldar* ('of the shield'). Here we should observe that some sword kennings, especially *sára linnr*, *morð-linnr*, and *bræ-linnr*, were quasi-formulaic, with a built-in propensity for variation of the baseword type. Thus instead of *benlinnr* ('wound-snake'), the poet could say *benlogi* (or *benfúrr* or *beneldr*, 'wound-flame'), and the referent, 'sword', would be unaffected. Einarr skálaglamm, for example, uses first *sárlinnr* and then *sáreldr* in a pair of *lausavísur*.⁷⁷ In *Plácítúsdrápa* the poet rings the changes on *morðlinnr* (v. 1) and *morðsól* (v. 29).⁷⁸ In such formulism, the baseword could become vulnerable to erroneous analogical interpretations. I would suggest that this rather obscure foreign word for 'snake', used in kennings in pre-twelfth-century poetry, has been misconstrued as 'fire', and so found its way into the 'fire' *pula* mentioned

⁷⁵ Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfússon, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, with a supplement by Sir William A. Craigie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), s.v.; Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, vols I–III (Kristiania: Den norske forlagsforening, 1886–96); Finn Hødnebo, *Rettelser og Tillegg* = Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over Det gamle norske Sprog*, vol. IV (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1972), s.v. Hans Kuhn pointed out a number of significant lexical correspondences between the German and the Scandinavian treatments of the matter of Sigurðr in his celebrated article, 'Westgermanisches in der altnordischen Verskunst', *Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 63 (1939), 178–236.

⁷⁶ Cited by Fritzner, *Ordbog*, s.v. *linnormr*.

⁷⁷ *Skjaldedigting*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B1, 124–25, vv. 2 and 3.

⁷⁸ Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Plácítús drápa', in *Plácítús saga*, ed. by John Tucker, Editiones Arnarnagænanæ, B 31 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1998), pp. 89–124 (pp. 93 and 107).

above.⁷⁹ Almost certainly it did not mean ‘fire’ to a poet of Eyvindr’s generation. The explanation of ‘*qlun jarðar*’ based on *ofljóst* can therefore be dismissed.

In re-examining the word *qlun*, I would like to start by considering its morphology. It must, as noted, be dative case. Masculine *qlunn*, ‘mackerel?’, has *qlni* in the dative singular, which if read into our line would wreck the metrics; the same would hold of any neuter doublet. My suggestion is that Eyvindr’s poem contains our sole attestation of an otherwise unrecorded feminine noun **qlun*. Morphologically, **qlun* would be a deverbative formation from *qlva*, ‘to ply with ale, to get somebody “aled”’. This very rare verb occurs, used impersonally, in a verse attributed to Egill in his saga:⁸⁰ ‘*Qlvar mik, þvít Qlvi | ql gervir nú fqlvan*’ (‘Ale is plied to me, since ale is now making Qlvir pale’).⁸¹ It follows that **qlun* would mean ‘ale-pouring, plying with ale’, corresponding in morphology though not in precise sense to modern *ölvun*, which means ‘intoxication, drunkenness’. The latter, a very common word, has apparently undergone analogical reformation from the sole relic of the verb, the free-standing past participle *ölvaður* (‘intoxicated’). Both the modern word and the postulated medieval word incorporate the deverbative suffix *-u/a-n-*, where *-n-* is the actual suffix and the preceding vowel represents the theme of the verb. Examples of the characteristic variation between *-an-* and *-un-* are *frýjjan/frýjjun*, *skemmtan/skemmtun*, *skipan/skipun*, *unan/unun*, and *ætlan/ætlun*. Forms in *-un* must be old even though not so common in the medieval Icelandic corpus as *-an*, since the latter have been levelled through the paradigm from the genitive case.⁸² For a parallel example of a formation in *-un/-an* surviving uniquely in poetry, compare *vinun* (‘friendship’, or perhaps, more actively, ‘making of friendship’) in a verse attributed to Hólmǫngu-Bersi.⁸³

Gothic has a parallel class of deverbatives, and the form *salbons* (‘unction’) not merely exemplifies their early origins but also demonstrates their applicability to

⁷⁹ For a recent treatment of the notion that the *pulur* consist of different chronological strata, see Elena A. Gurevič, ‘Zur Genealogie der *pula*’, *alvíssmál*, 1 (1992), 65–98.

⁸⁰ *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), p. 110, v. 10. The manuscript readings vary; contrast *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AI, 49 and BI, 43.

⁸¹ Bjarni Einarsson offers the gloss ‘I am getting drunk’ in his edition, *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, trans. Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 2003), p. 60, but it does not entirely convey the force of the verb in context. Compare on this *Egils saga*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, p. 110.

⁸² Ásgeir Blöndal Magnússon, *Íslensk Orðsifjabók* (Reykjavík: Orðabók Háskólans, 1989), s.v.

⁸³ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AI, 93–94, v. 8.

a semantic field relating to that of **qlun*. Rituals in early Scandinavia evidently included both ‘ceremonial beer-drinking’⁸⁴ and ceremonial smearing of the idols, as described in *Völsapátttr*. Closely related in formation and sense is the rare Old Norse-Icelandic word *blótun/blótan* (‘act of sacrificing, making sacrifice’).⁸⁵ This noun exists in parallel with *blótveizla* (‘sacrificial feast’).⁸⁶ Gothic *daupeins* ‘baptism’⁸⁷ is another example of a deverbative that despite the differing verbal theme belongs in the same general semantic field. More broadly, we can compare with Gothic *labons* (‘invitation’).

For the type of ale ceremony possibly denoted by the word *qlun*, we might invoke a *sveitar-drykkja* where the drinking vessel is passed from person to person after an initial blessing or dedication of some kind. Ale and mead were the drinks commonly dispensed on an occasion of this kind.⁸⁸ For a linkage between the drinking of ale and the gaining of safe-conduct, a truce, or sanctuary, we can compare Eyvindr’s *Hákonarmál*, v. 16: ‘Einherja grið | þú skalt allra hafa, | þiggtu at ósum ql’⁸⁹ (‘you shall have the safe-conduct of all the *einherjar*; take ale from the gods’). Though our prose sources are notoriously difficult to evaluate, chapters 43–44 in *Egils saga* are noteworthy as recounting the consumption of vast quantities of ale at a *veizla*, which includes a *dísablót* and is attended by a king, Eiríkr blóðøx, and his consort, Gunnhildr.⁹⁰

Returning to the story of Sigurðr jarl’s death, we note that the concept of ‘ale-drinking’ fits nicely with vv. 11 and 12 and the prose narrative:

Sigurðr jarl fór um haustit inn í Stjóradal og var þar á veizlum. Þaðan fór hann út á Qgló ok skyldi þar taka veizlur [. . .] Kom þá Grjótagarðr til móts við þá, komu ofanverða nótt á Qgló, þar sem Sigurðr jarl var á veizlu, lögðu þar eld í hús ok brenndu bæinn ok jarl inni með öllu liði sínu.⁹¹

⁸⁴ Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 251.

⁸⁵ *Ordbog over det norrøne prosasprog/A Dictionary of Old Norse Prose*, ed. by James E. Knirk and others, vol. II: *ban-da* (Copenhagen: Arnamagnæan Commission, 2000), s.v.

⁸⁶ *Ordbog*, ed. by Knirk and others, s.v.

⁸⁷ Joseph Wright, *A Grammar of the Gothic Language* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), §200, p. 93.

⁸⁸ Jan de Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, 2 vols (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1956–57), I, 425.

⁸⁹ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B1, 59; *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 196; Sundqvist, ‘Sagas, Religion, and Rulership’, p. 238.

⁹⁰ *Egils saga*, ed. by Nordal, p. 108.

⁹¹ *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, I, 206–07.

(Earl Sigurðr went during the autumn inland into Stjóradalr and was there at feasts. From there he went towards the coast at Qgló and was there to take dues of feasting. [...] Then Grjótgarðr came to meet them, they came at nightfall to Qgló where Earl Sigurðr was at the feast, laid fire in the house and burned the building and the Earl inside, with all his following.)

Here emphasis is laid on 'veizlur', no doubt employed in the sense of a reception or other provision of hospitality or goods in kind that is made by subordinates as part of the dues paid to an aristocrat like Sigurðr.⁹² This provision could have taken the form of a feast, a sense in which the word *veizla* is also plentifully attested. The setting of the feast is 'á Qglói', where the element *ló* evidently connotes a low-lying meadow flatland by a stretch of water,⁹³ no doubt a convenient type of rendez-vous. Customarily the *veizla* provided an opportunity for the cementing of friendships and pacts on all sides and would have included a ritual element.⁹⁴ Sigurðr might have officiated at such an occasion, in a role traditionally attributed to his fellow-Hlaðajarlar and to other rulers in Norway,⁹⁵ and Eyvindr's verse could have appropriately referred to it, rather than to the fire that is the immediate cause of Sigurðr's death. Curiously, the reading in *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol), 'jolum', presumably for 'jólum', meaning 'at Yuletide', denotes a similar ceremonial occasion, although the reading was no doubt arrived at by scribal emendation rather than by direct tradition. As to possible aesthetic effects, it is striking and perhaps ironic that v. 11 should present Sigurðr as one who supplied ('veitti') the ravens with liquor ('bjór') — a familiar 'beasts of battle' parody feast — in juxtaposition to v. 12, which in my interpretation depicts the death of the jarl at a literal feast.

In the *Egils saga* description of the *veizla* mentioned above, the ale appears to be passed round by a woman, often the presiding lady of the house, as typically elsewhere in the literature (compare the opening scenario in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*). With this in mind, the three words that follow 'qlun' in Eyvindr's verse could be understood as a kenning for 'woman', with 'jarðar' as a standard baseword and

⁹² Compare Fritzner, *Ordbog*, s.v.; Cleasby and Vigfússon, *Icelandic-English Dictionary*, s.v.

⁹³ Oluf Rygh, *Norske Gaardnavne*, 15 vols (Kristiania: Fabritius, 1898), rev. edn ed. by K. Rygh (Kristiania: Fabritius, 1903), I, 29 and 66; cf. Oluf Rygh, 'Norske Stedsnavne paa lo (lá, sló, og lignende)', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 7 (1891), 244–56 (p. 246).

⁹⁴ Stefan Brink, 'Fornskandinavisk religion – förhistoriskt samhälle: En bosättningshistorisk studie av centralorter i Norden', in *Religion och samhälle i det förkristna Norden: Ett symposium*, ed. by Ulf Drobin and others (Odense: Odense University Press, 1999), pp. 11–56 (p. 13).

⁹⁵ Compare Sundqvist, 'Sagas, Religion, and Rulership', p. 243.

‘alnar orms’ as a familiar defining element, denoting ‘woman with gold ornaments’. This woman would be the stereotype of the ‘hostess decked out with gold’, the cup- or horn-bearer at an ale-feast.

But this candidate solution still leaves a difficulty with the attested reading ‘í qlun jarðar’ that I have yet to canvass. Double alliteration in an even line, such as we see here, violates what we infer from Snorri⁹⁶ and from the attested corpus of alliterative poetry (Old Icelandic, Old English, Old Saxon, and Old High German) to be a classical rule. Since all manuscripts agree on the double alliteration, it might point to an early error in the transmission of the text.⁹⁷ Before drawing conclusions, however, we ought to investigate *kviðuháttir* norms. No example of double alliteration occurs in *Ynglingatal*, or in other purported predecessor texts in *kviðuháttir* form, the Rök stanza and Egill’s *Sonatorrek* and *Arinbjarnarkviða*. It is equally elusive in presumptively later *kviðuháttir* poems, such as Þórarinn loftunga’s *Glelognskviða*, Sturla Þórðarson’s *Hákonarkviða*, and the *kviðuháttir* compositions embodied in *Grettis saga*. I do, however, find an instance in *Nóregs konungatal* v. 82.7–8: ‘Jóans ættar | allir jofrar’.⁹⁸ Although this text is attested only in the poetically erratic *Flateyjarbók* there appears to be otherwise nothing questionable about the reading here. The poet might have been intending the cross-alliteration ‘j:V::V:j’ as a rhetorical flourish in the penultimate stanza, where a number of key words enunciated in immediately preceding stanzas are brought together. A second example of a similar kind occurs in *Merlínússpá* (II: 5), though in the *fornyrðislag* section of that work rather than the *kviðuháttir* one: ‘eldi ok járne | eylands jaðar’.⁹⁹ The pattern here (V:j::V:j) is similar to that of *Nóregs konungatal*, suggesting that this specialized form of double vowel alliteration had become an acceptable licence by the late twelfth century.

It may be, then, in light of these late occurrences, that our best expedient is to let ‘jarðar’ stand, but given that our warrant for double alliteration is weak and that the putative occurrence in Eyvindr is not precisely parallel with the twelfth-century instances, we should also consider whether any simple emendation is available. One such is to read ‘í qlun Njarðar’, which enables us to repair the

⁹⁶ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Háttatal*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 4.

⁹⁷ Finnur Jónsson has pointed to an undoubted error of parallel kind, corrected by the copyist himself, in the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*: ‘Afskriverfejl i gamle håndskrifter’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 46 (1930), 319–39 (p. 321).

⁹⁸ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BI, 590.

⁹⁹ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AII, 22, v. 5.

alliteration without adding any new letters. The effacement of the deity-name *Njǫrðr* in all witnesses to the text could possibly be explained as due to the influence of the final *-n* in ‘ǫlun’. Whether in recitation (through a mishearing of a syllable boundary) or conceivably in runic inscription (through customary haplography), or even in manuscript copying, it could have eclipsed the initial *n-* of the following noun. *Nomina sacra*, including those of such well-known gods as *Njǫrðr*, tend to become garbled in transmission; for an example in the Eyvindr tradition, compare his *lausavísa* 2, where many manuscripts, including *Kringla* (AM 35 fol) and *Fríssbók*, read ‘norðr’ for ‘Njǫrðr’.¹⁰⁰

A mention of *Njǫrðr* here would fit with the presence of a kenning element ‘Haddingja’ in the previous stanza (v. 11) and another kenning incorporating the name Yngvi-Freyr in the following stanza (v. 13: ‘Yngvi-Freys’). It looks as if these adjacent stanzas contain a concentration of references to the nexus of deities and semi-deities associated with *Njǫrðr*. That such a nexus may represent a very old tradition, perhaps with links to rites and cults associated with these deities, is suggested by a similar nexus of names (if we admit Ing in place of Yngvi-Freyr) in the Old English *Rune Poem*: ‘Ing wæs ærest mid East-Denum | gesewen secgum | [...] ðus Heardingas | ðone hæle nemdun’ (‘Ing was first among the East-Danes seen by men; [...] thus the Heardingas named that hero’). In Saxo’s *Gesta Danorum* Book I we learn that the hero Hadingus (so spelt) propitiates the gods with an annual sacrifice to Freyr, which Saxo tells us is called *Frøblot* by the Swedes.¹⁰¹ The circumlocution ‘Haddingja vals’ used by Eyvindr in *Háleygjatal* v. 11 may be related to this story in some way — as either ‘people slain by the Haddingjar’ or ‘the choice of the Haddingjar’, in the sense of ‘those chosen for sacrifice’.¹⁰² Saxo’s story of Hadingus and Regnhilda intersects oddly with that of *Njǫrðr* and Skaði, as told in the Icelandic tradition, in that the women of these ‘odd couples’ dislike living by the sea and the men dislike the mountains,¹⁰³ and

¹⁰⁰ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, AI, 71.

¹⁰¹ Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. by J. Olrik and H. Raeder (Copenhagen: Levin and Munksgaard, 1931–57), p. 29; *Saxo Grammaticus. The History of the Danes, Books I–IX*, ed. by Hilda Ellis Davidson and trans. by Peter Fisher (Cambridge: Brewer, 1979–80), p. 30; Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 214.

¹⁰² Compare Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, s.v. *Haddingr and Haddingi*.

¹⁰³ De Vries, *Altgermanische Religionsgeschichte*, II, 175. Georges Dumézil, *Du mythe au roman: la saga de Hadingus (Saxo Grammaticus, I, v–viii) et autres essais* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1970), argues for particularly strong connections between Hadingus and *Njǫrðr*, but I shall not pursue that point here.

may therefore be further evidence for a nexus of mythological figures in the particular traditions Eyvindr was using. So too may be the association of *Haddingjar* with 'bjór' in Eyvindr's v. 11, if we recall the story in Saxo that Hundingus, king of the Swedes, hearing that his friend Hadingus has died, prepares a special brew of beer ('cereali liquore') for his funerary celebrations but falls into the receptacle ('dolium') and drowns while serving it to his guests.¹⁰⁴

As putatively used in v. 12 line 3, '*Njarðar' would be a baseword defined by 'alnar orms', to produce a kenning signifying 'wealthy man'. This magnate could be either Sigurðr himself or some landowner who lays on the feast. The kenning 'alnar orms', rather than being the formulaic circumlocution for 'rich provider' used relentlessly in later skaldic poetry, might specifically point to the wearing of a ceremonial ring by this celebrant. There could be ready associations of ideas between gold rings and the swearing of oaths and pledges (for which a locus classicus is the story of the more famous Sigurðr — Fáfnisbani — as told in *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*, v. 21). The two-fold mention in vv. 11 and 12 of Týr, a god especially associated with a notorious pledge, also seems pointed in a context of treachery amid the ritual of the feast.

The final fragment of *Háleygjatal*, as presented in *Skjaldedigtning*, appears to reinforce the '(ale) feast' motif within the poem.

Jólna sumbl
enn vér gátum,
stillis lof,
sem steinabrá.¹⁰⁵

(A poem [the feast of the *Jólnir* > the gods], a praise for the ruler, we have produced once more, like a bridge of stones.)

The production of the poem is here aligned with two other communal functions, the holding of a feast and the erection of a stone bridge. As to the feast, we may note briefly that the phrase 'Jólna sumbl' ('feast of the gods'), represents a highly unusual type of kenning for 'poetry'. If we reckon with 'Óðinn's mead' as the staple (as seen in a variety of guises in vv. 1 and 2), then we can see that the present formulation varies the defining element (Óðinn) so as to incorporate the name for a collectivity of gods associated with and perhaps etymologically linked to the great feast of Yule-

¹⁰⁴ Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, ed. by Olrik and Raeder, pp. 34–35; *Saxo Grammaticus*, ed. by Davidson and trans. by Fisher, p. 35; Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion*, p. 216.

¹⁰⁵ Edition in Finnur Jónsson's *Skjaldedigtning*, A1, 71, B1, 62; Faulkes's *Skáldskaparmál*, I, 85.

tide (*Jól*). Equally, the baseword of the kenning is varied so as to connote an occasion (the feast) rather than merely something consumed on the occasion (mead).

As to the bridge, Julie Lund has recently brought together a mass of evidence that bridges were a natural venue for rituals performed in association with journeys. Weapons, jewellery, keys, whetstones, and tools were customarily deposited and animals sacrificed there, not only in Scandinavia, but in most regions penetrated by the Vikings.¹⁰⁶ In the late ancestral-religion and early Christian periods rune-stones were placed at bridges or fords either at the time of building or when repairs were made,¹⁰⁷ in what appear to have been ritual acts.¹⁰⁸ The bridge constituted not merely the physical passage from the settlement to the graveyard but also the symbolic passage from the area of the living to the area of the dead.¹⁰⁹ We see a similar nexus of ideas in vv. 6–7, which describe a hanging and the subsequent marking of the burial site on a headland, both once again manifestly ritual acts. More broadly, we can compare some key themes and images in *Háleygjatal* (Óðinn, journeys, headlands, kindred, feasting, death) with those enunciated in that great lament, Egill's *Sonatorrek*, where the hero stands in a liminal space, preparing to pass from life to death and meanwhile commemorating the passing of members of the kindred both senior and junior to himself in the genealogy.

In sum, then, *Háleygjatal* appears to embody numerous mythic and ritual traditions. A few may be read as specially indicative, albeit in a small way, of a social, political, and cultural separateness that intensified in the course of adaptation to new territories and new culture contacts and manifested itself most strenuously in the 'heathen reaction' of the Earls of Hlaðir to the incoming Christianity. More broadly, the poem commands our interest as providing a form of access to representations of social practices in a world where the ancestral religion still held sway.

¹⁰⁶ Julie Lund, 'Thresholds and Passages: The Meanings of Bridges and Crossings in the Viking Age and Early Middle Ages', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 1 (2005), 109–36 (p. 129).

¹⁰⁷ Sven B. F. Jansson, *Runes in Sweden*, trans. by Peter Foote (Stockholm: Gidlunds, 1987), pp. 91–92.

¹⁰⁸ Lund, 'Thresholds and Passages', p. 129.

¹⁰⁹ Lund, 'Thresholds and Passages', p. 119.

FAMOUS LAST WORDS:
MONOLOGUE AND DIALOGUE IN *HAMÐISMÁL*
AND THE REALIZATION OF HEROIC TALE

John Hines

er fát fornara, fremr var þat hálfó

(little is more ancient; that was more distant by half)¹

*H**amðismál* is the final poem in the *Poetic Edda* of the Codex Regius (GKS 2367 4^o), and it concludes the sequence of fifteen works that, in a fragmentary and unmethodical way, represent there the heroic legend of the very early post-Roman Burgundian royal dynasty, in Norse the *Völsungar*. This study was inspired in the first place by an awareness of the paradox in the early line from the poem quoted above: although the episode related in *Hamðismál* necessarily lies at the end of a historical sequence, precisely that temporal perspective is denied by the assertion that little was more ancient than this. It is, of course, easy to see that this statement is at one level just a simple rhetorical device. The text is declared to be about a very distant past, far from the present and very different from the circumstances of any audience or readership in the Viking Period, Christian Middle Ages, or subsequent time down to the twenty-first century. When, however, we place this alongside observations concerning the speech-acts of monologue and dialogue in the poem that have been discussed in the relatively small amount of modern critical study of *Hamðismál*, the implications of its paradoxicality become very much richer. It emerges that a range of dramatic discrepancies in different speakers' and listeners' points of view in the poem are

¹ The text is quoted from *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, vol. I: *Text*, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 4th edn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962), pp. 269–74. The quotation is of st. 2/5–6.

a constant and a deeply meaningful feature of the whole literary experience it offers. The participants in this range of speech-acts include, indeed, the anonymous narrator and his voice and the role of the early audiences as interpreters. To put it in simple terms, even if we accept that a clause like 'er fát fornara' is not supposed to be taken literally or realistically, that leads only to the question of how then we *are* to take it.

A further twist of the chronological enigma is the fact that *Hamðismál* can reasonably be argued to be one of the earliest eddic poems. We have several versions of the story in Norse literature, including prose redactions in *Skáldskaparmál* and *Völsunga saga*, although these are essentially derivative of earlier poetic sources in the form of *dróttkvætt* stanzas from a poem identified in *Skáldskaparmál* as Bragi Boddason's *Ragnarsdrápa*, and the related eddic poems *Guðrúnarhvöt* and *Hamðismál*. A useful aspect of a comparison of all of these sources, however, is to emphasize both thematic and presentational variations in the portrayal of a common, original story, and with that particularly to highlight the especially dramatic use of speech in *Hamðismál*. I analyse and discuss *Ragnarsdrápa*, and its ostensible character as skaldic *ekphrasis*, a 'shield-lay', which purportedly describes and praises a pictorially decorated shield, in a paper I have written as a companion piece to this one.² That paper emphasizes the value of examination and interpretation in terms of the concepts of speech-act and discourse analysis, and as a necessary concomitant to that approach the importance of contextualizing the dramatic character of the text — its performativity, we might say — in specific physical, social, and historical circumstances. The point of the pairing of these papers is to explore the contrast in substance between the two major poetic versions of the story of Hamðir and Sörli and the death of Iormunrekkr at the same time as their comparability with respect to the productivity of this common interpretative approach. Through the deep differences that are revealed, one can constructively observe the alternative characters and effectiveness of the poems as, in fact, *generic* variants, adapting different modes of presentation to the different contexts in which they were designed to be experienced.

² John Hines, 'Ekphrasis as Speech-act: *Ragnarsdrápa* 1–7', forthcoming in *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 3 (2007). That study was first presented within the framework of a plenary round-table session at the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham, August 2006, in collaboration with Margaret Clunies Ross, who suggested the theme, Signe Horn Fuglesang, Russell Poole, and Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, who moderated the discussion.

Direct Speech

The first direct speech in *Hamðismál* comes from Guðrún Gjúkadóttir: obviously a key character in the poem, since it is she alone who embodies the link between *Hamðismál* and all the preceding poems of the sequence, and indeed she who is at the centre of the majority of these lays.

‘Systir var yccr Svanhildr um heitin,
sú er Iqmunreccr íóm um traddi,
hvítom oc svartom, á hervegi,
grám, gangtqmom Gotna hrossom.

‘Eptir er ycr þrungir þjóðkonunga,
lífíð einir ér þátta ættar minnar.

‘Einstæð em ec orðin sem qsp í holti,
fallin at frændom sem fura at qvisti,
vaðin at vilia sem viðr at laufi,
þá er in qvistscæða kœmr um dag varman.’ (sts. 3–5)

(‘She was your sister, Svanhildr her name,
whom Iqmunrekkr trampled with horses,
white and black, on the main road,
grey, steady-paced, stallions of the Goths.

‘You have been pushed back, kings of nations;
you alone are the living branches of my kin.

‘I have been left standing alone like an aspen in a wood;
deprived of kinsmen, like a fir with no branch;
denied my will, like a branch with no leaf
when the woman cutting wood comes in the warmth of the day.’)³

In *Hamðismál*, however, her single speech of three stanzas is no more than a short introduction to the poem; here, indeed, lies the real divergence between *Hamðismál* and the other poem in the *Edda* dealing with this episode, *Guðrúnarhvqt*, which does not follow Hamðir and Sqrli to Iqmunrekkr’s court but rather remains with the weeping Guðrún for her to declaim an eleven-stanza lament, reviewing her griefs. Guðrún’s speech in *Hamðismál* plays a practical narrative role to a minor degree, in that she motivates her sons to avenge their half-sister Svanhildr (Guðrún’s daughter by Sigurðr) by relating how Svanhildr was killed, deliberately trampled with horses. There is some emotive force in her words in stanza 3, which emphasize that Svanhildr’s execution took place on the public

³ Author’s translation.

highway ('á hervegi'). In stanza 4, the emotive pressure on the brothers is made more explicit, not only by pointing out to them that 'Eptir er ycr þrungit', but further by conjoining this with the ironically magnificent epithet *þjóðkonunga*. They alone survive as direct descendants to take vengeance and uphold the family honour (4/3–4). This of course anticipates the complicating factor of the curious involvement of Erpr, Hamðir and Sqrli's half-brother by a different mother according to this poem, although a full brother in the thirteenth-century prose versions and apparently in *Ragnarsdrápa* too.⁴

Particularly remarkable and important, though, is the final stanza of Guðrún's speech. Here she turns to consider and describe herself, and does so using a substantial image formed of three similes: she is solitary, like an aspen in a wood; she is shorn of kinsmen and denied her will, like a fir-tree stripped of branches and like a bough stripped of leaves. As in the case of the line quoted to introduce this paper, the rhetorical rather than the strictly factual character of these conceits is clear enough, but an important further feature, supplementing its sheer imaginative force, is the fact that the speech is, in realistic terms, proleptic: Guðrún is not yet entirely alone, bereft of kinsmen and unable to attain her will — but soon she will be. This recurrent distortion of chronological perspective is reinforced and thus emphasized by the remarkable broadening of perspective in the final line, to what is effectively a comfortable, pastoral vignette of a rustic *qvistscæða* going about her business on a warm summer's day. While Guðrún nobly monumentalizes herself into a timeless, static image, common life carries on. Moreover that realistic image of a woman cutting wood functions precisely to position the audience at a real distance, as part of that actual, practical world, and separate from Guðrún not only in era but also in character and culture.

Guðrún's speech is followed by speeches from each of the two brothers, Hamðir and Sqrli. These are significant both in how they extend and illustrate the range of discursive possibilities, but also as the clearest introductory examples of an important technique in this poem: the narrator introduces the speaker, but does so with a summary characterization of the individual. In these two cases we are therefore alerted most of all to attend to the character's words by the need to find out what exactly may be meant by describing Hamðir as 'inn hugomstóri' (first at 6/2) and Sqrli with the words 'svinna hafði hann hyggio' (9/2). It is certainly not im-

⁴ *Völsunga saga*, ed. and trans. by R. G. Finch (London: Nelson, 1965), ch. 41; Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes, 2 vols (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, 1998), I, ch. 42. The details of what is implied in *Ragnarsdrápa* are discussed in the course of the present paper.

mediately apparent what Hamðir's 'great-mindedness' consists of: Ursula Dronke's translation 'proud in valour' is very positive indeed, and Carolyne Larrington's 'the strong-minded one' follows it rather more cautiously.⁵ The term is also used of the new-born Helgi Hundingsbani in the first stanza of *Helgakviða Hundingsbana in fyrri*,⁶ and so can be taken as a rather general heroic epithet: someone with a lot of the right sort of heroic attitude. In *Hamðismál*, though, we are clearly asked to compare, evaluatively, Hamðir's great-mindedness with Sǫrl's wisdom.

The disastrous consequences of being a man who likes to think big may be demonstrated for us by Hamðir being the one — as the poem as we have it presents the story — who cannot resist gloating over and taunting Iǫrmunrekkr:

Hitt qvað þá Hamðir, inn hugomstóri:
'Æstir, Iǫrmunreccr, occarrar qvámó,
bræðra sammæðra, innan borgar þinnar.
Fætr sér þú þína, höndum sér þú þínom,
Iǫrmunreccr, orpit í eld heitan.' (st. 24)

(Then Hamðir said this, the great-minded one:
'You longed, Iǫrmunrekkr, for the coming of us two,
the sons of one mother, within your fortress.
You see your feet, you look upon your hands,
Iǫrmunrekkr, flung into the blazing fire.'))

As a dramatic speech-act, however, this has another crucial characteristic in common with Hamðir's first speech, which answers Guðrún's whetting. There Hamðir tried to contextualize the immediate situation by telling the bigger story, something which is so deeply buried in implicit allusions in Guðrún's own words that she can be described as completely sidelining it. She says nothing of Svanhildr's paternity or of the tale of Gunnarr and Högni's hostility to Sigurðr and her vengeance both upon them and upon Atli. Of course, if the final stanza of Guðrún's first speech in *Guðrúnarhvot*, 'Urðoa iþ glíkir þeim Gunnari [. . .]' (3/1–2) ('You two have not turned out as Gunnarr and Högni [. . .]'), is inserted or restored here, as Ursula Dronke would prefer,⁷ then Hamðir's retort that Guðrún had little inclination to praise Högni's action when Sigurðr was slain

⁵ *The Poetic Edda*, vol. I: *Heroic Poems*, ed. by Ursula Dronke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 159–242; text and translation on pp. 161–67; *The Poetic Edda*, trans. by Carolyne Larrington (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 238–42 and pp. 293–94.

⁶ 'þá hafði Helga, inn hugomstóra, | Borghildr borit í Brálundi' (*Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 130) ('then Borghildr had given birth to Helgi, | the *hugomstórr*, in Brálundr').

⁷ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 180–89.

would be directly and immediately motivated. Yet even if the exchange in the extant *Hamðismál* of the Codex Regius has developed in literary transmission from the more naturalistic sequence in *Guðrúnarhvot*, this is certainly not necessarily a case of corruption and degeneration. Rather it achieves a distillation of the differences between the speakers and their perspectives. Although Guðrún refers to past, present, and (proleptically) future in *Hamðismál*, her vision is dominated by her immediate grief. Hamðir, however, looks back and spells out in painful detail the cyclically repeating tragic dilemmas of Guðrún, taking vengeance on brothers for husband and husband for brothers, and bearing sons only for them to be sacrificed in the cause of vengeance and honour. After using the stark and simple image of the blue and white bed-covers soaked in Sigurðr's blood (7/1–4), he sums this all up with a proverb that is as unsubtle as the modern English one about cutting off one's nose to spite one's face is familiar:

‘svá scyldi hvern þðrom veria til aldraga
sverði sárbeito, at sér né striddit.’ (8/5–8)

(‘A man should suppress another to kill him in such a way
with wound-biting sword so that he is not killed himself.’)

Sorli responds to the preceding speech-acts by refusing to accept the terms of either of them. Nor is he willing to enter into any sort of debate about either the past or the future course to be followed:

‘Vilcat ec við moður málom scipta;
orðz þiccir enn vant ycro hváro.’ (9/3–6)

(‘I do not wish to bandy arguments with mother;
to both of you, there still seems more to be said.’)

Sorli's wisdom — if we are willing to accept it as that — is purely a resigned acceptance of the obligation to accede to Guðrún's urging and so to submit to the disastrous personal consequences to be expected. He does not entirely refuse to contemplate the past, but his references to that time, the present, and the future are all cursory, and limited in scope — all indeed linked by the reference to weeping, through the noun *grátr* and the verb *gráta*:

[. . .] hvers biðr þú nú, Guðrún, er þú at græti né færat?
‘Bræðr grát þú þína oc buri svása,
niðia náborna, leidda⁸ nær rógi;
ocr scaltu oc, Guðrún, gráta báða.’ (9/7–10/6)

⁸ MS reads *leiða*.

(‘What are you asking for now, Guðrún, which you will not get, with tears?
 ‘You wept for your brother and your dear sons,
 close-born kinsmen brought into the battle;
 you must also, Guðrún, weep for us both.’)

Along with practically all modern editors and commentators on the poem, I am convinced that the repetition of the line identifying Hamðir as the speaker at the beginning of stanza 26 is a later error of transmission, and that the four lines of speech in stanzas 26 and 27 should be taken as a single utterance by Sǫrli, identified by the vocative *Hamðir* in the third line, which is anticipated by the vocative *bróðir* in the first.⁹

Hitt qvað þá Hamðir inn hugomstóri:
 ‘Ból vanntu, bróðir, er þú þann belg leystir,
 opt ór þeim belg boll ráð koma.’
 ‘Hug hefðir þú, Hamðir, ef þú hefðir hyg[g]iandi;
 mikils er á mann hvern vant, er manvitz er.’ (sts. 26–27)
 (Then Hamðir said this, the great-minded one:
 ‘You caused disaster, brother, when you undid that bag;
 often from such a bag evil plans come.
 You would have had a mind, Hamðir, if you had a one that could think;
 there is much wanting from any man, when he is foolish.’)

Perhaps the presence of two vocatives misled a thirteenth-century copyist into seeing these as two separate utterances, but it was a dull-witted mistake if so; in fact, if we can justify removing the manuscript’s stanza 26 lines 1–2 we might also do so for the same line in stanza 24 (1–2: quoted above), so that it would then be Sǫrli who taunts Iðrmunrekkr and Hamðir who curtly upbraids. In stanzas 27–28, then, the first of which is explicitly addressed to Hamðir, Sǫrli’s counter-charge to Hamðir would be that the latter’s lack of thought was responsible for Erpr’s death. I would stress that I do not regard this as a convincing or fruitful line of speculation; only that we must note that it is possible. What *is* striking, though, is that from stanza 28 onwards, the final three stanzas of direct speech could be spoken by either or both of the brothers:

‘Af væri nú haufuð, ef Erpr lifði,
 bróðir occarr inn bǫðfrœcni, er við á braut vágom,

⁹ Sophus Bugge, ‘*Hamðismál*: aus den Vorarbeiten zu einer neuen Ausgabe der sogenannten Sæmundar Edda’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 7 (1876), 377–406, 454; *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 174; T. A. Shippey, ‘Speech and the Unspoken in *Hamðismál*’, in *Prosody and Poetics in the Early Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of C. B. Hieatt*, ed. by M. J. Toswell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), pp. 180–96 (pp. 191–92).

verr inn vígfræcni¹⁰ — hvøttomc at dísir —,
gumi inn gunnhelgi — gorðomc at vígi —.

‘Ecci hygg ec ocr vera úlfa dæmi,
at vit mynim síalfir um sacaz,
sem grey norna, þau er gráðug ero
í auðn um alin.

‘Vel hofom við vegit, stöndom á val Gotna,
ofan, eggmóðom, sem ernir á qvisti;
góðs hofom tírar fengið, þott scylim nú eða í gær deya,
qveld lifir maðr ecci eptir qvið norna.’ (sts. 28–30)

(‘The head would be off now, if Erpr had lived,
our brother, the battle-bold one, whom we two slew on the road,
the war-hardy man — the *dísir* urged us to it —
the hallowed warrior — they made us kill.

‘I do not think that we shall act like wolves,
that we shall fight with one another,
like the bitches of the Norns, those who are nurtured
ravenous in the wastes.

‘We have fought well, we stand on the Gothic dead,
over the sword-drained bodies, like eagles on a bough;
we have gained good honour, whether we must die now or another day;
a man does not live through the evening beyond the decision of the Norns.’)

The dominant first-person pronoun is now the dual *við/ocr*, not the singular.¹¹ The brothers merge into the same, monumental and heroic, final image: eagles on a branch, at the opposite end of the lay from Guðrún’s proleptic vision of herself as the bare, branchless stem of a tree.

Erpr: Words and Action

In analysing the speech-acts of Guðrún, Hamðir, and Sqrli in this way, we have looked both at the beginning of the poem and its end. But in doing so we have bypassed a crucial section right in the middle — truly the pivotal point of *Hamðismál*. This is the encounter with and slaying of Erpr (sts. 11–17). Again, this is a part of the poem that most modern commentators have taken to be

¹⁰ MS reads *varr inn viðfræcni*.

¹¹ Line 29/1 has second-person dual *ycr* not first-person *ocr* in the MS but the standard emendation as in the line as quoted above is justified by the pronoun *vit* in line 3.

corrupt as it stands, and the favoured solution is the so-called Bugge shift, to move one stanza, the twelfth in the manuscript copy of the poem, and to treat it as stanza 14.¹² This yields a realistic and dramatically straightforward sequence of events: Hamðir and Sqrli leave the courtyard (st. 11); they meet Erpr and, insultingly, ask what help he can give them (sts. 12–13 as renumbered in the Neckel/Kuhn edition); Erpr answers in proverbs that confuse and provoke them (sts. 13–14); so they kill him (st. 15).

I am myself unpersuaded of the need to move the stanza and simplify the text in this way. Tom Shippey seems to come very close to the same conclusion in analysing the Erpr episode in terms of a ‘pragmatic linguistic’ theory of Face Threatening Acts. However for reasons that he does not fully explain he sheers away from a justification of the manuscript order, as argued by Carl Wesle in the 1920s, simply stating that he finds it unacceptable.¹³ It may perfectly reasonably be suggested, though, that the key adjustment — and indeed the only adjustment — we need to make in our reading is to accept that there are other presentational issues involved here than a straightforward telling of the story alone; and that at this point narrative simplicity is, for good reasons, subordinated to the presentation of character, and to an exploration of the complexities of discourse and its use as a communicative and dramatic medium (what J. L. Austin, widely regarded as the founder of modern speech-act theory, labelled ‘performative utterance’, and its effects as illocutionary and perlocutionary acts).¹⁴ An alternative reading of this kind would see the verses as they stand in Codex Regius as containing three separate but still sequential, partly overlapping, and partly recapitulatory, narrative passages on the characters’ movements: they leave home and ride over the mountains (st. 11); there is an encounter with Erpr on the road (MS sts. 12–15, numbered by Neckel/Kuhn, following Bugge 14, 12, 13, 15); they dress, arm, and journey to Iqrmunrekkr’s hall (sts. 16–17).

The only dramatic problem is that Erpr makes his elliptical, gnomic utterance, “‘Illt er blauðom hal brautir kenna” (14*/5–6)¹⁵ (“It is no good to show the ways

¹² Bugge, ‘*Hamðismál*’.

¹³ Shippey, ‘Speech and the Unspoken’, esp. pp. 187–90; C. Wesle, ‘Die Sage von Ermenrich’s Tod’, *Beiträge zu Geschichte der deutschen Sprache und Literatur*, 46 (1921–22), 248–65.

¹⁴ J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962), esp. pp. 4–7, 20–23, and 94–107.

¹⁵ For practicality’s sake, it is necessary to observe the stanza numbering of the Neckel and Kuhn edition in giving references here. The stanza in question is number 12 in the manuscript order. Henceforth the stanza number is asterisked to denote its conjectural and here questioned status.

to a soft-hearted man”) and they react to it in indirect speech: ‘Kodðo harðan mið hornung vera’ (14*/7–8) (‘They declared the bastard to be very hard’) before we are told the three have met (12*/1–2; MS st. 13). Two narrative lines introduce Erpr’s speech, and, as in the case of Hamðir and Sqrli before him, these offer a characterization of the man: ‘mærr um léc á mars baci’ (14*/3–4) (‘splendidly he held himself on the back of a horse’). Whether his magnificence is just show or true to his character, this is a proud individual who aspires to dignity and glory of a conventional, heroic, warrior style. His proverbial first utterance could simply be a challenge to be strong: ‘It is no good showing the way to a man who is soft.’ Implicitly, ‘it is only worth following this route if you, or indeed we, are courageous.’ But the words can be taken as implying that those addressed are, if not already identified as cowardly, at least suspected of being so. Hamðir and Sqrli react in this way, ironically contrasting the adjective *blauðr* with an implication that Erpr is *harðr* only in speech and appearance, and throwing the crude term of abuse *hornung* back at the splendid mounted figure.

It is intriguing that, of all the versions of the tale, it is only *Hamðismál* that has Erpr as anything other than a full brother of Hamðir and Sqrli. Snorri in *Skáldskaparmál* and the author of *Völsunga saga* have all three of them as the sons of Iónakr and Guðrún, and *Ragnarsdrápa* refers to them as *barmar*, enigmatically also speaking of Hamðir and Sqrli avenging Erpr’s death on Iqrmunrekkr: ‘þás hrafnbliár hefndu harma Erps of barmar’ (*Rdr* 3/7–8) (‘when the raven-blue brothers avenged the hurts of Erpr’).¹⁶ Were it not for this peculiarity of *Hamðismál*, Erpr should have been with the group all the time as one of Guðrún’s young sons (2/9), and have ridden from the courtyard with them. As it is, the problem of just when and where Erpr makes this first speech is, if anything, highlighted by the text itself, through the simple adverbial phrase ‘eino sinni’ qualifying ‘þá qvað þat Erpr’ (14*/1–2). The usual interpretations of this — ‘he spoke once only’; ‘he made a single speech’ — are as illogical as are any of the other complexities of this section of the poem. Of course he can only make one speech at a time; and if this

¹⁶ *Ragnarsdrápa*, in Snorri Sturluson, *Skáldskaparmál*, ch. 49; *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, A1–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), B1–II (Rettet tekst), ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15), A1, 1–4, B1, 1–4. There is a grammatical ambiguity here in that the genitive *Erps*, ‘of Erpr’, could be taken either with the noun *harma*, ‘hurts’, as translated above, or with *barmar*, ‘brothers’. Etymologically, *barmi*, pl. *barmar*, ‘brother[s]’, must derive from the Common Germanic noun **barm-*, ‘lap’, ‘bosom’, implying the sons of a single mother: precisely what *Hamðismál* asserts Erpr is not, describing him as *sundrmæðr* (13*/1), although sharing a father with Hamðir and Sqrli. If two *barmar* avenge the injuries of a third man identified only by his name, this is a very strong implication that all three share the same relationship.

is at the end of the exchange it will have to be an elliptical way of saying 'he said just one more thing', since it would be at least his second utterance in the proposed rearranged order. Moreover, it would be a perfectly justifiable reading of the phrase *eino sinni* to interpret it as 'on one particular occasion' or 'at a certain time'.¹⁷ There is nothing to tell us more about what that juncture and context was. But this may be enough simply to lift this vignette out of the immediate setting and relieve us from puzzling over how to fit it into some thoroughly naturalistic, dramatic presentation that respects and preserves the unities of time and place.

The following line in the manuscript, 'Fundo á stræti stórbrogðóttan' (12*/1–2) ('On the street they found him, ambitious with great schemes'), is capable of various interpretations too, of which the simple narrative explanation, 'they met Erpr on the way' is altogether the most reductive. For a start there is a range of senses to the verb *finna*, from English 'meet' to 'find', while the remarkable compound adjective *stórbrogðótttr* throws the principal emphasis on to the character of Erpr as they encountered him. If the irony of the adjective *harðr* can be carried over from the preceding line in the manuscript, 'too clever by half' may well represent Hamðir and Sqrli's perception of their half-brother. They see him and refer to him as *iarpscammr* (12*/3), anything but *mærr*, and, rather than asking him directly if he proposes to help them, ask one another across him how he could do so. Unhelpfully, and perhaps even foolhardily, he answers with a slightly enigmatic proverb (st. 13*). At this point the refusal to accept Erpr as he wishes to present himself is extended to a refusal to understand his utterance. Already roused for the terrible test of battle, Hamðir and Sqrli vent their aggression in an unequal and lethal assault on the man they have dismissed as inferior. They prepare to kill in vengeance for their maternal step-sister by gratuitously cutting down their paternal step-brother. Even the narrative becomes proleptic here, with the comments that the drawing of the swords alone delights the witch, and they cut their force by a third (st. 15).

The range of varieties of discourse in this densely packed and crucial passage is remarkably wide. Uniquely in *Hamðismál* we have direct speech replied to with indirect speech: in the manuscript order first Erpr, direct speech, to the brothers, indirect speech (14*/5–8); then the converse: a direct question from the brothers with Erpr's reply in indirect speech (12*/3–4, 13*/1–4); followed by a further, entirely rhetorical question in direct speech from the brothers (13*/5–8). As at the end of the tale (see above), any differentiation between Hamðir and Sqrli is

¹⁷ See Richard Cleasby and Gudbrand Vigfusson, *An Icelandic-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1874; 2nd edn, 1957), s.v. SINNI, B β.

totally lost here; they as a pair are instead distinguished from Erpr. Here too we have not only the gnomic proverbs, but responses and discussions of those in a real dialogue — a dialogue, however, in which speech proves extraordinarily ineffective in achieving real communication and understanding and building a fellowship. This seems to be recognized as a constant problem on a recurrent basis in the eddic poems.¹⁸

This episode turns out to be the true transitional point of the story. In the end it transpires that Hamðir and Sqrli were doomed not just because Guðrún was sending them on a suicidal mission, as Sqrli had gloomily assumed, but because they blindly refused Erpr's offer to assist. As I have analysed it, the poem's concurrent exploration of the range of possibilities for dramatized narrative presentation is, technically speaking, a piece of dizzying virtuosity, which most modern editors have preferred to simplify by emendation. This is not to go so far as to suggest that there is some deep moral message embedded in this conjuncture of narrative importance and technical complexity. The whole presentation does, however, nicely embody how Hamðir and Sqrli have become the pawns of their circumstances and of their own primitive, instinctive reactions to those — whereas, in fact, their fate lay in their own hands all along. So indeed had Erpr's fate lain in his, and we should not be tempted to regard him too sympathetically as a hapless and misunderstood victim, rather than as disastrously pretentious in his physical self-presentation and his sententious way of speaking. If it is valid, though, to see the exploration of the dramatic potential of contrasted speech-acts as a vital and significant feature of *Hamðismál* as a whole, then perhaps we can regard the profound failure of communication in this passage as, thematically, one of its most important points. Even in that case, though, it is perhaps most prudent to insist that the importance is still an importance in *dramatic* terms, not in terms of any moral axiom that might be abstracted from or constructed upon it.

The Structural Grammar of Monologue and Dialogue

This proposition can be developed by suggestion that it is precisely and only in such dramatic or artistic terms that *we* can now really appreciate *Hamðismál*, and evaluate it comparatively, not only with other eddic poems but also against the other Norse versions of the legend. Useful preparatory material for this sort of

¹⁸ Judy Quinn, 'Giving and Taking Advice in Eddic Poetry', unpublished paper read to the Centre for the Study of Medieval Society and Culture, Cardiff, March 2003.

broader critical assessment of the poem is provided in the studies by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson and Terry Gunnell, both of whom have undertaken surveys of dialogic structures in the eddic poems.¹⁹ Those, however, are just starting points that can now be taken in new directions. Einar was particularly concerned with the scope for classifying the poems of the *Edda* and interpreting that scheme in evolutionary terms, while Gunnell developed his study with a particular, indeed almost exclusive, focus on the mythological poems. All the same, he makes some most perceptive observations on the performative characteristics of these poems in his book on the origins of drama in Scandinavia, and these are in turn highly applicable to a discussion of *Hamðismál*.

We cannot simply classify the poems of the *Edda* into a series of well-defined and nicely distinctive types in terms of their structuring around monologue or dialogue; but they can be compared in terms of what one might call a precise structural grammar. To begin with, it is crucial to note the range of speech-markers we have: the textual features that unambiguously denote words as being in direct speech. Internal to the speeches, the key features are the use of the first and second personal pronouns: *the* grammatical encoding of the speaker-addressee relationship.²⁰ The second-person singular pronoun *þú* is commonly extended into vocative phrases, in the form of name and/or title — as *bróðir* and *Hamðir* in stanzas 27–28 of the poem under consideration, quoted above. Particularly striking is the frequency with which imperatives are used: ‘Seg þú mér þat, Völundr’, ‘Gacc þú til smiðio’, ‘Mæltira þú þat mál’, ‘Up ristu, Þacráðr’, and indeed ‘Göngom baug siál’, to use just one other source, *Völundarkviða*: a poem that in fact has a majority of narrative lines over direct speech.²¹ The deployment of such unambiguous markers of direct speech can in fact sustain poems that consist entirely of dialogue. The highly regular *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Alvíssmál* are the purest specimens of this; *Vafþrúðnismál* is nearly as regular. *Lokasenna* and in particular *Skírnismál* then stand out as of especial interest and artistry for the successful deployment of a consecutive series of dramatically sequential dialogues. It would

¹⁹ Einar’s researches are presented in the form of a very compact summary overview of his findings: Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld* (Reykjavík: Almenna Bókafélagið, 1962), pp. 200–202; more expansive is Terry Gunnell, *The Origins of Drama in Scandinavia* (Cambridge: Brewer, 1995), pp. 185–94.

²⁰ É. Benveniste, *Problems in General Linguistics* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1971), pp. 195–204 and pp. 217–22; Austin, *How to Do Things*, pp. 53–82.

²¹ *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 116–23; *The Poetic Edda*, vol. II: *Mythological Poems*, ed. by Ursula Dronke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), pp. 239–328.

appear more than just a curiosity but genuinely significant that we see far less of this fully dialogic presentation in the non-mythological and heroic lays such as *Völundarkviða*. The only genuine exception to this is *Gripisspá*. We are admittedly quite close to this structure in what is left of the fragmentary *Reginsmál*, but there much explanatory prose has been interwoven with the stretches of dialogue.²²

That brings us to the other major device marking direct speech, which is the narrative or ‘marginal’ introduction of the speaker. This technique is particularly well used in *Hamðismál*; for instance:

[...] er hvatti Guðrún, Giúca borin,
sono sína unga at hefna Svanhildar: (2/7–10)
([...] when Guðrún, Giúki’s daughter, urged
her young sons to avenge Svanhildr.)
Hitt qvað þá Hamðir inn hugomstóri (6/1–2, 24/1–2)
Hitt qvað þá Sqrli — svinna hafði hann hyggio (9/1–2)
Þá qvað þat Erpr einn sinno
— mærr um lék á mars baci — (14*/1–4)
Þá hraut við inn reginkunngi
baldr í brynio, sem biörn hryti. (25/1–4)
(Then the man of divine nature grunted,
a lord in his mail-coat, as a bear would growl.)

It is interesting that in *Vaffprúðnismál*, otherwise a purely dialogic poem, the one stanza that introduces a speaker does so only implicationally, naming Óðinn as the subject of other actions and thus identifying him as the speaker:

Fór þá Óðinn at freista orðspeki
þess ins alsvinna iqtuns;
at hóllo hann kom oc átti Íms faðir;
inn gecc Yggr þegar. (5/1–6)²³
(Then Óðinn went to test the word-wisdom
of this all-wise giant;
he came to the hall that Ímr’s father owned;
Yggr went in at once.)

Otherwise it is in fact a clear and surely significant feature that amongst the mythological poems the embedding of direct speech and dialogue within extensive

²² *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 173–79.

²³ *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, pp. 45–55.

explanatory narrative is found only in the two poems that feature Þórr as the principal divine character, *Hymiskviða* and *Þrymskviða*. These apart it is a distinctive characteristic of non-mythological, heroic poems: amongst the finest examples are *Völundarkviða*, *Sigurðarkviða*, *Guðrúnarkviða in fyrsta*, and *Atlakviða*. This very marked technical difference between the two main classes of eddic poems was explored by Gunnell in terms of the implications of the particular characteristics of the mythological poems; but it merits equally close study in relation to the history and transmission of the other branch of the *Edda*, the heroic.

There are further distinctions of type that it is useful to note. There are, for instance, some dialogic poems that are quite different from the regular, relatively rapid statement-and-response pattern of, say, *Hárbarðsljóð*; these should be described as alternating monologues rather than active dialogues. Interestingly, the best examples of this structure are heroic rather than mythological poems: *Fáfnismál* and *Guðrúnarkviða in önnur*. It is worth noting, too, how rare the pure monologue of *Hávamál* and most of *Sigrdrífumál* is. The definition of this range of types is critically valuable for giving us a real basis for understanding some of the apparently most fragmented poems of the *Edda*, particularly the *Helgakviður* and *Reginismál*. Rather than seeing those only as preserved sherds of shattered poems, remembered speeches glued together with passages of eddic prose, it would be equally reasonable to postulate a sequence of development in which the narrative verses progressively give way to increasingly elaborated direct speeches, to the point at which the former disappear altogether to be replaced by prose. This indeed would be closely in line with the genesis of the prose *Edda* and *Völsunga saga*, and the many other sagas embedding skaldic verses.²⁴ Looked at in this light, however, it may be regarded as a constructive and progressive development, not a motley collection of frantic efforts to restore and so preserve a broken and decaying poetic tradition.

All in all, though, it is still valid to make the broad assertion that even at the time when the Codex Regius anthology was first written down, most mythological poems were suited to dramatic presentation in the range of ways discussed by Terry Gunnell, while many of the heroic poems were suited rather to recital: to performance by a single *skáld*, not to being acted out. There are, as noted, important exceptions — for instance in the Þórr poems on the one hand, and those on Helgi Hundingsbani on the other — but the main point on this occasion is not

²⁴ Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005), pp. 69–82; cf. Heather O'Donoghue, *The Genesis of a Saga Narrative: Verse and Prose in Kormaks Saga* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

to stress the mythological/heroic contrast and to reflect especially upon the implications of that. What I would rather draw attention to is how recognition of the simultaneous existence and transmission of this range of presentational options both explains and validates the identification of a deep self-consciousness of the great and serious range of variation in the 'illocutionary' and 'perlocutionary' effect of speech-acts that has been argued for above in respect of *Hamðismál*. As just suggested, it is conceivable that there may have been a chronological trend which served to expand the range of types, and to contrast narrative with dialogue as older and newer modes respectively, but as the Codex Regius literally shows, eventually the whole range came to be presented side by side.

Realizing the Drama: The Implicit Context

A rather different version of the story of Hamðir, Sörli, Erpr, and Iqrmunrekkr was presented in the skaldic poem *Ragnarsdrápa*, in verses that seem plausibly to be datable to as early as the late ninth century.²⁵ If narrative versions, for example *ekphraseis* such as *Ragnarsdrápa*, were an essential complement to the necessarily simple and selective depiction of scenes from stories on physical objects,²⁶ this emphasizes for us all the more that narrative poems — of various kinds — had a key role to play in providing the necessary explanations of what those stories were, and what their significance was, in the changing contexts of the Viking Period and early Christian Middle Ages in the Norse world. Again, these would form a counterpart to, albeit be very different from, semi-ritual performances of mythological encounters and lore as identified by Gunnell.

This point is made to lead us finally to the setting of *Hamðismál* and to consider how it is engaged with in the narrator's first and final stanzas:

Sprutto á tái tregnar iðir,
græti álfa in glýstomo;
ár um morgin manna þolva
sútir hveriar sorg um qveyca. (st. 1)

(Growing at the threshold were grieved-for deeds,
a weeping of elves, in place of joy;

²⁵ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 204–17; Hines, 'Ekphrasis as Speech-act'.

²⁶ Signe Horn Fuglesang, 'Billedbeskrivende dikt', in *Ting og tekst*, ed. by E. Mundal and A. Ågotnes (Bergen: Bryggens Museum, 2002), pp. 119–42; Fuglesang, 'Runesteinenes ikonografi', in *Runesten, magt og mindesmerker: Tverrfagligt symposium på Askov Højskole 3–5 oktober 2002*, ed. by Gunhild Øeby Nielsen, Hikuin, 32 (Højbjerg: Hikuin, 2005), pp. 75–94.

early in the morning, all of the sorrows
over human tragedies bring pain to life.)

Þar fell Sqrli at salar gafli,
enn Hamðir hné at húsbaki. (st. 31)

(Sqrli fell there at the end-wall of the hall,
and Hamðir succumbed at the back of the building.)

The first stanza has been seen as an addition to the poem, but if so it is a fine adaptation of an earlier text, setting the mood and scene for what is to come.²⁷ It is a most powerful stanza, using the image of the threshold to evoke a sense of the dawn of time, of transitional stages of experience, and most pertinently of the contrast between a familiar and relatively well-managed interior and an uncontrollable and hostile outside. ‘Sprutto á tái tregnar íðir’ has the same sad paradox of cruel growth that T. S. Eliot exploited — far more brutally one might say — at the beginning of *The Waste Land*:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Violets out of the dead land [. . .].

The weeping of the elves adds mystery to this image. They may as well weep as any group at the sorrow to unfold, but why are they selected here? *Their* sympathy with Guðrún and Svanhildr can, I think, only distance those characters further from the imaginative sympathy of a real audience.²⁸

There is an obvious connexion to be made between the early morning evoked in stanza 1 and the ‘qveld [. . .] eptir qvið norna’ in the direct speech of Hamðir and Sqrli — it does not matter whose, by this point — of stanza 30. This is followed by the short and prosaic final stanza, which nevertheless earned two pages of discussion in Ursula Dronke’s edition and commentary.²⁹ She was struggling with the idea that the adverbial phrases *at salar gafli* and *at húsbaki* must mean that Hamðir and Sqrli finally fall outside Iqrmunrekkr’s hall, not in it. Those concerns are simply unnecessary. Neither phrase is the sort of stock expression in Old Norse literature of the kind that *einu sinni*, for instance, has become in Modern Icelandic that would justify the claim that it strongly implies such a view. The fact that the most similar parallel examples we have, cited by Dronke,

²⁷ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 182.

²⁸ E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1964), pp. 230–32; Alaric Hall, *Elves in Anglo-Saxon England: Matters of Belief, Health, Gender and Identity* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2007).

²⁹ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 190–92.

fall in contexts where pragmatically the focus of attention is on a building approached from the outside cannot entirely overrule the simple semantics of the words. Walls have two sides, as an audience of *Hamðismál* would have understood perfectly well, and all the verse says is that the two brothers fell against the wall at different parts of the building. The reference to the building encourages us to make another major connexion which has been lost sight of, and that is with the *tá*, the threshold, from stanza 1. At either end of the poem, three sides of the building are thus evoked, along with the doorway between the outside and the inside. Gable-end doorways in fact tend only to appear in particularly imposing late Viking-period Scandinavian halls, such as those of the Trelleborg type (Fig. 1A–B). In the hall section of known early Icelandic buildings the doorways are regularly in one of the long sides, though equally consistently towards one or

Figure 1 (right). House-plans (longhouses) of the Viking Period and immediately post-Viking Period from Iceland and Denmark. Redrawn diagrammatically and to scale (see scale-bar) to illustrate the principal points of relevance to the discussion. The orientation of the plans has also been regularized.

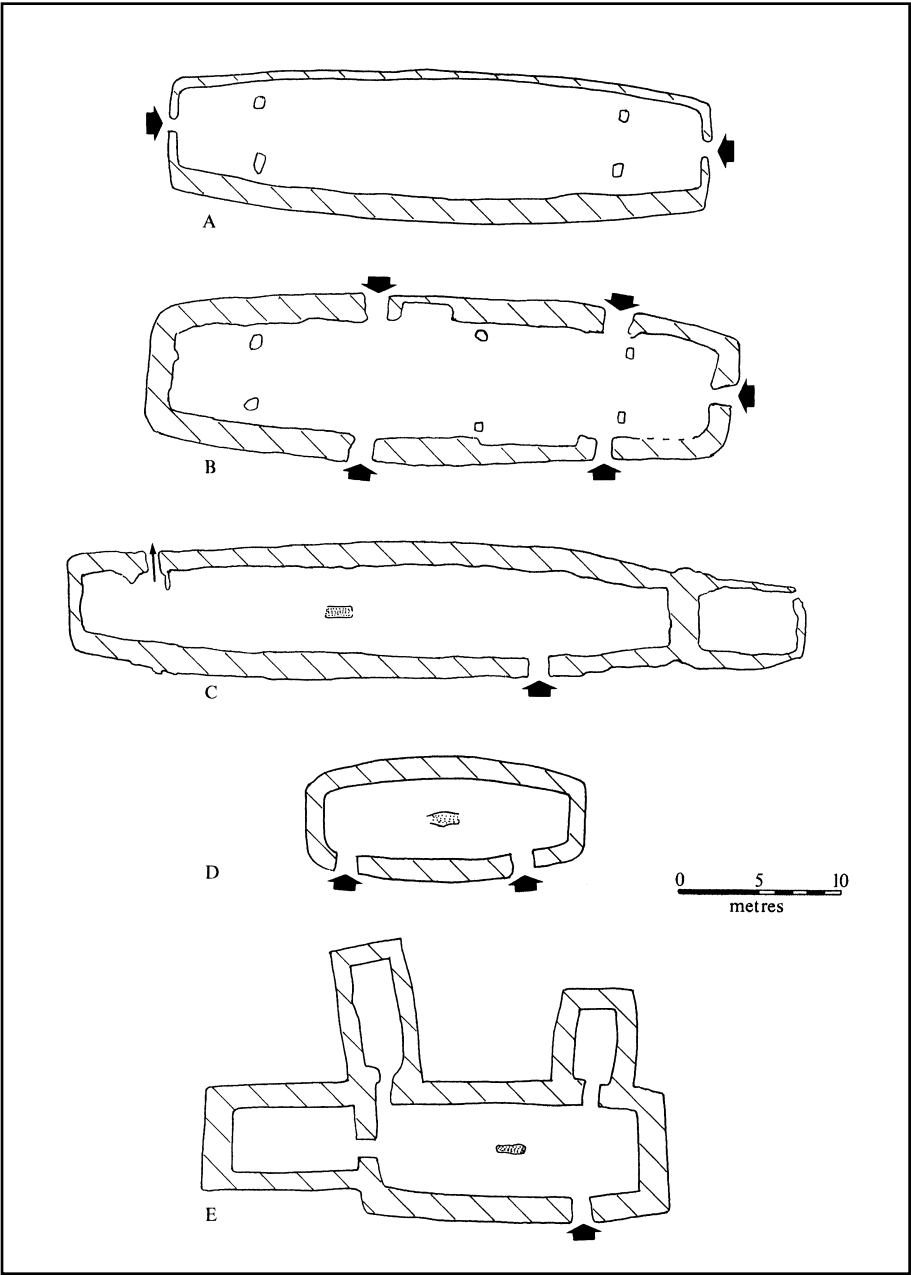
(A) Nørre Felding kirke, Nørre Felding parish, Ulfborg herred, Ringkøbing amt, Denmark, Building 5. A ‘Trelleborg-type’ longhouse with doorways at the ends. Mid- and later eleventh-century.

(B) Nørre Felding kirke, Building 6. Longhouse with doorways both in the long side and either end found immediately alongside Building 5 (see A) and thought to be its immediate predecessor.

(C) Hofstaðir, Mývatn, Norðurland, Iceland. Longhouse and subsidiary buildings of the tenth–eleventh century, doorways in both long sides. After Adolf Friðriksson and Orri Vésteinsson, ‘Hofstaðir í Mývatnssveit – Yfirlit 1991–1997’, *Archaeologia Islandica*, 1 (1998), 58–73, fig. 4.

(D) Vatnsfjörður, Ísafjarðardjúp, Vestfirðir, Iceland. Longhouse, phase 1. After Ragnar Edvardsson and Thomas H. McGovern, ‘Archaeological Excavations at Vatnsfjörður 2003–04’, *Archaeologia Islandica*, 4 (2005), 16–30, fig. 2.

(E) Stöng, Þjórárdalur, Suðurland, Iceland. Cameral farmhouse with side-buildings. After M. Stenberger, *Forntida Gærdar í Ísland: Nordiska arkeologiska undersökningen i Ísland 1939* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1943).



both of the ends of the building (Fig. 1C–E).³⁰ It is thus, in fact, almost to be assumed that the *húsbak* and the *gafl* are adjoining walls, not opposite ones. Like the pastoral image of the *qvistscæða* referred to previously, the realistic dimensions of these references could have served to connect any individual recital of *Hamðismál* with a familiar setting — maybe even that of the actual performance. The potential was always there, then, for an early audience to make an imaginative association of the events they were hearing about with a hall-shaped chamber like that in which they were located.

Along with this, it is essential to note the dispassionate tone of the final stanza. Ursula Dronke noted how thoroughly it contrasted with the grandiloquence of the final speech from one or other of the brothers.³¹ Even what is absent here expresses a crucial attitude. We do not have the vaunting conclusion of *Atlakviða*, or the defiant praise of *Beowulf*. This is the way the Völsung cycle ends, with the two last warriors falling dead. Despite even the ironic connotations that can be attributed to the descriptions of Hamðir as *inn hugomstóri* and Sǫrli as wise earlier on, by the end the brothers *have* transcended their previous differences, and die with honour and dignity. Actually, so does Iormunrekkr, at least in so far as he ensures the vengeance for his own death upon his slayers. But this is hardly magnificently heroic. Everyone is dead, except for Guðrún who is left alone, bare, thin, and hard, as she saw herself at the beginning. She has nothing more to say or do. She can be satisfied that there is no one left to avenge; no one to do it if there were; no one left to lose. Even as the cathartic conclusion of the tragic cycle this makes no attempt to scale the Aristotelian heights of pity and terror. The due procedure of allowing the brothers to claim ‘góðs hofom tírar fengið’ is observed,

³⁰ We lack a reliable and detailed survey of the archaeology of Icelandic settlement and buildings from the Viking Period and later Middle Ages. M. Stenberger’s *Forntida Gærdar i Island: Nordiska arkeologiska undersökningen i Island 1939* (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1943) is still informative as well as being of historical importance. For an up-to-date conspectus of sites and bibliography, see Orri Vésteinsson, ‘Icelandic Farmhouse Excavations: Field Methods and Site Choices’, *Archaeologia Islandica*, 3 (2004), 71–100, although Orri’s principal concern is a critical historical review of methodology, not of the discoveries themselves. See also Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, ‘The Hall in Norse Literature’, in *Borg in Lofoten: A Chieftain’s Farm in North Norway*, ed. by G. Stamsø Munch, O. S. Johansen, and Else Roesdahl (Trondheim: Tapir, 2003), pp. 265–72 (pp. 268–69), for a valuable survey of the vocabulary of eddic and skaldic poetry concerning buildings, considered in relation to archaeological evidence.

³¹ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, I, 190: ‘The simplicity of stanza 31 provides a fine contrast to the grandiloquence of Sǫrli’s last words, restoring a sense of reality after the wild blaze of sensational acts.’

but altogether the text of *Hamðismál* now presents this just as a story to be told and brought to an end. As that, and only as that, does it impinge upon the comfortable, everyday world: as a fine, insightful, artistic performance, which enriches the contemporary culture of the audience and is to be appreciated for that. Who in their right minds would yearn to emulate any actions in the tragic cycle of the Völsungs? This, most interestingly, does *not* appear to be the attitude implicit in the portrayal of this episode as a heroic exemplum on the splendid shield of Ragnarr, and in the equally splendid skaldic poem that simultaneously praises that shield and Ragnarr's presentation of it as a gift. In these respects, *Ragnarsdrápa* and *Hamðismál* are each individually consistent, but mutually thoroughly contrastive, in terms of narrative, tone, genre, and implicit social and material context. All of those factors need to be taken into account to understand these texts fully, and all can indeed be made effective use of with due and careful attention to the evidence available to us.

III. Oral Traditions in Performance and Text

**THE IMMANENT SAGA OF GUÐMUNDR RÍKI*

Gísli Sigurðsson

translated by Nicholas Jones

One of the main problems facing those who deal with ancient written texts that we have reason to believe may derive some of their material from an oral tradition is to come to some kind of understanding of their relationship with that tradition: to what extent they are based on the tradition, and what the part of the actual writers was in their composition. Did those who wrote the texts have a more creative attitude in their writing than was the norm among oral storytellers and poets, and what part if any did any written sources they may have had to hand play in their writing? And not least, how were these written texts received by their original audiences, people who we may suppose were familiar with oral tales and poems about similar incidents and characters to those described in the written texts? Do the texts exhibit signs that their writers presupposed this kind of knowledge of their audiences and/or readers — as is invariably the case with oral narrative? Or do they try to present a complete and fully self-sufficient picture of their characters and events, in the way expected of creative authors nowadays?

Our answers to these questions are crucial in any attempt to understand and interpret the aesthetics of the texts with which we are dealing. Our aesthetic judgement depends to some extent on how we envisage the creation of these texts: whether we suppose, on the one hand, that they were intended to meet the same kinds of demands of characterization and presentation of incident as we apply to modern works of literary fiction; or, on the other, whether they still rested upon the method of the oral story tradition, where, as the tellers tell their story, they constantly allow themselves to refer to material that is already known to and

shared by their audience, directly assuming such a knowledge in order for what they say to become comprehensible.¹

The sagas of Icelanders (also known as the family sagas) provide a particularly good test case for discussing questions of this kind. These sagas consist of around forty prose stories from different parts of Iceland and constitute a distinct literary genre, a forerunner to the European novel. We have, however, no information about who the particular individuals were who were responsible for the writing of any of the sagas, though many of them bear clear marks of an authorial consciousness.² They were mostly written in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries — though some were written in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — and they describe events from almost all parts of Iceland that are purported to have taken place in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries. In some cases the narratives begin in Norway or the Viking colonies in the British Isles, before moving on with the characters to Iceland, where the settlements started around 870, and they relate the loves, fates, and conflicts of the first generations of people in the country, up to and beyond the conversion in the year 999/1000.

I have argued in a recent book that it is very difficult to account for the narrative technique used in the sagas which are set largely in the east of Iceland unless we assume that the general mode of the oral tradition is still very much alive in them.³ If we view the sagas in the light of such a tradition it becomes possible to explain why they are written in the way we know them, why characters can appear on stage in different texts without any introduction, and how incidents that are outside the sagas but which are still significant for the particular saga being told can be referred to as familiar events. One may even argue that for one particular character at least, Þorkell Geitisson, it is possible to construct a coherent saga of his life out of the various and unrelated written sagas in which he appears. This saga, which I call **The Immanent Saga of Þorkell Geitisson*, may never have been told in complete form (and was certainly not written) but would clearly have been

¹ Carol J. Clover, 'The Long Prose Form', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 101 (1986), 10–39; John Miles Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

² Halldór Guðmundsson, 'Skáldsöguvitund í íslendingasögum', *Skáldskaparmál*, 1 (1990), 62–72.

³ Gísli Sigurðsson, *The Medieval Icelandic Saga and Oral Tradition: A Discourse on Method*, trans. by Nicholas Jones, Publications of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

perceived as valid by audiences who were familiar with the saga tradition of the east of Iceland.⁴

The sagas of Icelanders present an image of a society where a shared set of laws and ethical values applies from one saga to the next, often with the same chieftains appearing in many of them and with similar family connections linking characters in different sagas — though of course with discrepancies and irregularities on specific points of genealogy, entirely in line with what we might expect of an oral tradition. It is very difficult to explain such consistency within a body of literature without assuming that the sagas were built upon some kind of narrative tradition that was to a large extent held in common by all the inhabitants of the scattered farming communities of the country. In spite of various minor differences, the similarities that link the sagas throughout the country are apparent and undeniable and it is natural to read them as a single written literary genre. In addition to the traditional characteristics, each saga has its own special peculiarities of language and style, features that may be seen as the marks of the authors who put them together.⁵

The uniform, and in many respects, realistic picture of the society presented in the sagas has seduced many people into treating them as historical sources for the age in which they are set. But for such purposes they turn out to leave a great deal to be desired, and historians have had no trouble in demonstrating that the sagas cannot in any way be considered reliable sources on a par with contemporary records. For instance, the chronologies of individual sagas frequently fail to stand up to scrutiny, and inconsistencies between them come to light once scholars start trying to bring them into line with the dating system we use nowadays, rather than by comparing the texts with notable events or the regnal years of kings and earls in the way the sagas themselves do.⁶ For all that, the overall picture we get from the sagas works in most respects and the serious historical discrepancies stand out in contrast. Meanwhile, literary specialists never tire of finding new depths in the artistic qualities of the narratives, suggesting that the sagas should be viewed rather as works of art than as records of fact. As a result of these doubts concerning the source value of the sagas, the 'official' position (insofar as one can

⁴ See Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, pp. 161–84.

⁵ Örnólfur Thorsson, 'Orð af orði: hefð og nýmæli í Grettlu' (unpublished cand. mag. dissertation, University of Iceland, 1993).

⁶ See Guðbrandur Vigfússon, 'Um tímatal í Íslendingasögum í fornöld', *Safn til sögu Íslands og íslenskra bókmennta að fornu og nýju*, 1 (1856), 185–502; and also the introductions to individual sagas in the Íslensk fornrit series.

talk of one) within the disciplines of history and archaeology has for many years now been to reject any historical testimony found in them. But this is also unsatisfactory; the problem is more complicated than this simplistic view — that we should throw the sagas overboard en masse in historical research — allows for. So it is no wonder that, substantial academic reservations notwithstanding, scholars are frequently tempted to use the sagas in various ways as sources for a kind of reality, for instance in the disciplines of anthropology and social history.⁷

Rather than using their shortcomings to reject the sagas as historical sources out of hand, it is possible to look at them from the other direction and take the view that much of what they have to say can only be explained by appeal to an unbroken memory in an oral tradition reaching from the times they describe up to the time they were put into writing. If this were to be true, it would be rash in the extreme to deny oneself the use of the sagas as historical sources entirely. At the same time, these texts need to be approached with caution and with the emphasis on bringing out the general picture they present.⁸ One must assume that this picture will often include echoes of varying attitudes as well as fragments of information from the rich narrative tradition from which the sagas arose.⁹ This same tradition also engendered other kinds of sources such as *Íslendingabók* (Book of the Icelanders),¹⁰ *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements),¹¹ the kings' sagas, and miscellaneous genealogical lore that can be used to supplement the picture that emerges from the sagas. Of these, the first two are works of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the former provides a brief summary of the main events in the country's history, notably the constitution, the establishment of the Alþingi (national assembly) in 930, and the conversion; the latter lists and gives details of the settlers in all parts of the country, their origins and ancestors, sometimes interspersed with short accounts of their lives and their descendants. Both these works are often regarded as more 'historical' than the sagas of the Icelanders themselves, although they had no access to any information about the past other than from the same oral tradition as lay behind the sagas. The kings' sagas deal to a large

⁷ See Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, pp. 41–48.

⁸ Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, pp. 253–63.

⁹ Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, pp. 309–20.

¹⁰ *Íslendingabók*, in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Íslensk fornrit, 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 1–28.

¹¹ *Landnámabók*, in *Íslendingabók. Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, pp. 29–397. (English trans. as *The Book of Settlements: 'Landnámabók'*, by Hermann Pálsson and Paul Edwards, University of Manitoba Icelandic Studies, 1 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1972).

extent with the kings of Norway and Denmark, often with short accounts of the dealings between them and Icelanders.

Before we can take any firm position on the information value of the sagas, we need first to reconstruct their collective picture of reality and through this attempt to rediscover the shared learning and memories preserved within the tradition. The picture that emerges from this is first and foremost the tradition's image of the past. Depending on the circumstances, it may contain strong elements of truth about this past, though it can hardly be trusted on specific details, there always being considerable scope for creativity in the actual telling of the stories.¹² The remarkable thing is that the general picture of the Viking expansion and the settlements in the North Atlantic that emerges from these sources matches in all important respects the picture that emerges from archaeology. And the only possible way the saga writers could have acquired this common fund of knowledge was from oral tradition.¹³

We must remember, too, that contemporary sources and archaeological remains, every bit as much as the sagas, need to be treated with caution before we can come to any conclusions about exactly what and how much can justifiably be drawn from them. In the use of such sources there is often a long process of interpretation between the source itself and the image of human reality constructed using it. To deny oneself the use of the sagas in research on the period the sagas describe is thus a serious mistake. For all that the truth presented in the sagas is often a free version of the actual truth and the sagas are driven as much by the laws of artistic narrative as by any strict regard for historical accuracy, it is still possible to get much closer to the ideas and attitudes of the people who told these stories — and expressed in them their view of the world, their ethics, and their ideas about the past and present. By reading the sagas carefully, we can achieve much more than by pretending they do not need to be taken seriously in any discussion of the world outside literature. But in doing so we always need to bear in mind that 'history' is never single and 'true', but many-voiced and infinitely varied, and it is often how people and events are thought of or judged that is the most

¹² For the saga picture — the mental map — of 'Vínland', see Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, pp. 263–302; for that of the British Isles, see Gísli Sigurðsson, 'Mynd Íslendinga-sagna af Bretlandseyjum', in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature; Sagas and the British Isles: Preprint Papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6–12 August 2006*, ed. by John McKinnell, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick, 2 vols (Durham: University of Durham, Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2006), I, 278–87.

¹³ See Gísli Sigurðsson, *Medieval Icelandic Saga*, p. 258.

important factor in determining what is said about the past (and the present), and what is selected for telling and the manner in which it is told.

As an example of how it is possible to treat the problems described above, we may consider the picture presented in the sagas of the chieftain Guðmundr *ríki* ('the powerful') of Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður in the north of Iceland. Guðmundr appears as an important chieftain in several different sagas, but his life story is nowhere traced systematically as is done for certain other characters. One may reasonably ask where the saga writers got their information about Guðmundr from: did it come from other written sources? or perhaps from the creative imagination of an author? or from a living tradition in which Guðmundr played a part? And to what extent is it reasonable to think that this tradition preserved genuine recollections of a real man who may have been the prototype of the saga character? Doubtless the recollections were also blended with 'made up' stories like the exemplum of Ófeigr Járngerðarson's visit to Guðmundr *ríki* found in *Ljósvetninga saga*, ch. 11, which Magerøy has shown had literary parallels in a story told elsewhere about Guðmundr góði, Bishop of Hólar.¹⁴

Genealogies of Guðmundr *ríki* are given in both *Íslendingabók* and *Landnámabók* (S 177, H 143; S 187, H 154; S 188, H 155; S 322, H 198; S 255, H 219). According to these, Guðmundr had noble kinsmen in several of the Viking territories outside Iceland: Earl Hunda-Steinar in England, Auðunn skǫkull (who is reputed to be an ancestor of the present Queen of England), Ragnarr loðbrók, King Óláfr Haraldsson of Norway (Saint Óláfr), and Grímr kamban, traditionally the leading settler of the Faroe Islands. Guðmundr was descended from or related through marriage to (a) noble heathens and other people from the Hebrides, which associates him automatically with the 'proto-Christianity', or 'settlement Christianity' in Iceland; (b) Ingólfr Arnarson, known from tradition as the first settler of Iceland; (c) Ingimundr gamli, the leading early settler of the western part of northern Iceland; (d) Sæmundr the Hebridean; (e) Helgi magri, the son-in-law

¹⁴ Hallvard Magerøy, 'Guðmundr góði og Guðmundr ríki: eit motivsamband', *Maal og Minne* (1959), 22–34. In what follows, references are to chapter numbers in *Íslendinga sögur og þættir*, ed. by Bragi Halldórsson, Jón Torfason, Sverrir Tómasson, and Örnólfur Thorsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Svart á hvítu, 1985–87). Direct quotations are translated by Nicholas Jones. For an English translation of the sagas, see *The Complete Sagas of Icelanders, Including 49 Tales*, ed. by Viðar Hreinsson, 5 vols (Reykjavík: Leifur Eiríksson, 1997). References to *Landnámabók* (Book of Settlements) are to chapter numbers in its two principal manuscripts, *Sturlubók* (S, AM 107 fol) and *Hauksbók* (H, AM 371 4°); where references are separated by commas they refer to parallel passages in these two manuscripts.

of Ketill flatnefr, who is named in the sources as a chieftain in the Hebrides and Scotland; and (f) Hallr of Síða, the leading advocate and spokesman of the Christian party at the time of the conversion in 999/1000. The texts also state that Guðmundr's descendants included important figures in the early Church in Iceland such as Bishop Ketill of Hólar, the priest and early historian Sæmundr fróði of Oddi (where Iceland's most famous medieval writer, Snorri Sturluson, was raised), and the controversial Bishop of Hólar, Guðmundr Arason góði.

From Guðmundr *ríki's* genealogies alone, as given in these sources, it is clear that he was regarded as belonging to the topmost echelon of society. The other main group of sources to mention him are the sagas of the Icelanders. Using these it is often possible to work out the supposed dating of the various events he was believed to have been connected with. By comparing the accounts found in the various sagas we can construct a relative chronology of these events, and from this we can build up an overall picture of Guðmundr's life and career as we may suppose it existed in the minds of those who listened to the sagas.

Probably the earliest case Guðmundr is associated with is a feud that took place in the north-east of Iceland, described in *Vápnfirðinga saga*. Here Guðmundr lends his support to a piece of legal sharp practice in a dispute between two local chieftains, Brodd-Helgi and Geitir Lýtingsson (ch. 6). He later wants to pull out on the grounds that he is gaining too much unpopularity from the affair compared with any advantage or profit he might stand to make, but he accepts payment in return for his continued support (ch. 10). Shortly afterwards, probably in 986, Guðmundr's client, Brodd-Helgi, is killed. In the prosecution following the killing it seems that Guðmundr has shifted his support to Brodd-Helgi's former opponent, Geitir (chs 12, 14). The image we get is thus one of an avaricious opportunist.

In *Vatnsdæla saga*, which, among other things, recounts the career of Ingimundr the Old, the leading settler in the western part of the North Quarter of Iceland, we are presented with a satirical picture of a certain Glæðir who is killed just before 990. He is said to be 'a great popinjay, garrulous and stupid and a first-rate swaggerer' (ch. 44). He is also said to be related to Guðmundr, to Guðmundr's ridicule it seems.

In *Víga-Glúms saga* Guðmundr is named in connection with events in Eyjafjörður in the north in the years 986–1003. A piece of legal chicanery is hatched in which Guðmundr is shown as being powerful and avaricious but no match in wits for his brother Einarr (chs 25–26). He is also seen as being spineless in battle (ch. 27), and the difference in intelligence between the two brothers comes out in Guðmundr's eagerness to accept a duplicitous invitation that his brother sees through and avoids (ch. 28).

Vǫðu-Brands þáttr is an independent tale incorporated in *Ljósvetninga saga*, in the first part of which Guðmundr himself is the main character. In the *þáttr* (*Ljósvetninga saga*, ch. 10) we are given an example of Guðmundr's intransigence and haughtiness in matters of law when he refuses to pay compensation in a just case and relies on his power and influence to be able to ride roughshod over his opponents. But he comes across as lacking political guile, and his plans are thwarted when his brother Einarr is persuaded to marry his daughter Jórunn to Guðmundr's adversary (chs 11–12). This happens some time before 989.

In *Ljósvetninga saga* itself Guðmundr is described as being on friendly terms with Earl Hákon, the de facto ruler of Norway, and with Þorgeirr, *goði* of the *Ljósvetningar*, the lawspeaker of Iceland in the years 985–1001 (ch. 2). Þorgeirr is known from *Íslendingabók* as the man who, with proper regard for justice and impartiality, delivered the ruling at the Alþingi in 999/1000 that Iceland should adopt Christianity. Here, however, there is little sense of glory in their association, since they allow themselves to be bribed by Earl Hákon to facilitate the escape from justice of a deeply unpleasant bully and molester of women. Their avarice in this affair gives rise to a rancorous feud that lasts into the next generation, since Þorgeirr's sons turn against him as a result (chs 3–4). In the saga Guðmundr is named in connection with events from 993 onwards until some time after 1014 (see below) but there is no mention of any direct involvement in the events surrounding the conversion of the country.

In *Sqrli þáttr*, another self-contained episode within *Ljósvetninga saga*, there is a description of Guðmundr as a chieftain, in residence at his farm in all his pomp, surrounded by a retinue of young men of noble birth whose sole function is to be 'part of his set' (ch. 5). One of them, Sqrli, wins the hand of Guðmundr's daughter by playing upon his vanity. There is no reliable way of dating when these events are supposed to have happened. Guðmundr's inflated sense of his own importance is also the theme of *Ófeigs þáttr* (*Ljósvetninga saga*, ch. 6). Here a stalwart local farmer, one of Guðmundr's followers from the Þingeyjarþing district, Ófeigr of Skqrð, takes it into his own hands to show Guðmundr that his conduct is in reality tantamount to tyranny over the ordinary people of the neighbourhood; Guðmundr accepts his lesson in return for a guarantee of Ófeigr's support in other matters.

In *Kristni saga* ('The Saga of Christianity'), *Kristniboð Þangbrands* ('Þangbrandr's Mission'),¹⁵ *Laxdæla saga*, and Snorri Sturluson's version of *Óláfs saga*

¹⁵ *Kristniboð Þangbrands*, in *Biskupa sögur* I, ed. by Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, 2 vols, *Íslenzk fornrit*, 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2003), II, 127–45.

Tryggvasonar in *Heimskringla*,¹⁶ Guðmundr's son Halldórr is named as one of the chieftains' sons held hostage by King Óláfr in Norway as he attempts to coerce the Icelanders into accepting Christianity shortly before the year 1000. Guðmundr here is clearly being portrayed as a man of national standing and one of the country's leading chieftains. *Valla-Ljóts saga* takes place shortly after the conversion, mostly during the tenure of the lawspeaker Skapti Þóroddsson (1004–30). Once Guðmundr has assumed a position of local authority after the death of his father Eyjólf, he chooses as his ally a rowdy and unpopular man named Hreðu-Halli, who establishes himself in the valley of Svarfaðardalur in Eyjafjörður. Halli attempts to tighten his grip on the area some time after the conversion but is eventually killed by the local farmers (chs 2–4). Guðmundr wishes to uphold his prestige in the ensuing litigation but in the event allows himself to be bought off (ch. 8). When he himself tries to impose his will on the area with force, his plans backfire, and it is in fact his adversary, Ljótr, the consummate politician and man of consensus and reconciliation, with whom Guðmundr is forced to come to terms. In their dispute Ljótr gets particular support from the lawspeaker Skapti (chs 8–9); interestingly, there is no mention of any family connection between Guðmundr and Skapti, though according to *Njáls saga* Guðmundr's daughter was married to Skapti's son. Though the saga says that Guðmundr maintained his honour and prestige in the affair, it is clear that the narrator considers Ljótr to have come out of it as the man of greater standing.

Outside the introduction and the *þettir* described above, the main action of *Ljósvetninga saga*, so far as it concerns Guðmundr, revolves around the public accusation levelled against him of *ergi* — a combination of sexual deviance and cowardice (in some texts also associated with a disreputable form of magic), an insult that is invariably viewed in the world of the sagas with great seriousness and one that merited swift and uncompromising retribution (ch. 13). Guðmundr's response consists in crushing Þórir Helgason, the husband of the woman who had voiced the slander, through savage and pitiless litigation, and leaving him destitute. In the lawsuits Guðmundr uses devious means to hoodwink his brother Einarr; this succeeds temporarily, although the difference in intelligence between the two brothers comes out later and is underlined by a story about their younger days (chs 14–17). Guðmundr takes longer to avenge himself on the original perpetrator of the slander, Þorkell hákr, the son of Þorgeirr the lawspeaker.

¹⁶ [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bergljót Kristjánsdóttir, Bragi Halldórsson, Jón Torfason, and Örnólfur Thorsson, 3 vols (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1991).

In *Njáls saga* Guðmundr is central in the litigation at the Alþingi in 1011 and 1012 following the killing of Hǫskuldr, the *goði* of Hvítárnes, and the burning of Njáll. The setting of these scenes is Þingvellir, a long way from his power base in the north of Iceland. Guðmundr is introduced into the saga with a spectacular catalogue of family connections behind him, with forefathers including four kings and descendants numbering all the leading men in the country (ch. 113). The inclusion of these foreign kings takes the genealogical information given in *Njáls saga* well beyond any of the ancestors found in *Íslendingabók* or *Landnámabók*. In the kin-based society of the sagas this kind of presentation is a sure sign that the support or opposition of such a man is likely to be of great significance, as indeed it turns out to be. The saga describes the Njálssons going from chieftain to chieftain soliciting support, including to Guðmundr *ríki* and to Þorkell hákr (ch. 119). When Guðmundr is reluctant to help them, Njáll's eldest son, Skarpheðinn, throws in his face the slander perpetrated by Þórir Helgason and Þorkell hákr, with which it is assumed the saga's audience would be familiar. Unsurprisingly, Guðmundr refuses to side with a man who has brought up this particular subject, but he has a change of heart when he hears that Skarpheðinn has subsequently utterly humiliated Þorkell himself and he promises him his unqualified support (ch. 120). Guðmundr proves resourceful and dependable and shows considerable cunning in his pursuit of the case, even artfully manipulating his family connections with lawspeaker Skapti, mentioned earlier, and getting both credit and gifts for the way he has handled the affair. The unusual thing here is that Guðmundr himself goes to some personal expense to achieve a lasting settlement; in return he comes out of the case with greater honour than we are accustomed to seeing him getting elsewhere and cements alliances of friendship and support with several of the most powerful people in the country — both assets of great value in the society of the sagas.

In *Ölkofra þáttr*, which is set at Þingvellir, seemingly some time in the years 1010–20 (the chronology of the *þáttr* is unusually indeterminate), Guðmundr is brought into the events with the purpose of showing that his support invariably depends on his getting something in return. The counterplot of those whose side he refuses to take is to raise once again the charge of *ergi*, that he 'couldn't stop someone getting through the little pass between your buttocks and come away without humiliation' (ch. 4).

After the events related in *Njáls saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga* brings an end to the story of Þorkell hákr's slander of Guðmundr, the theme that motivates the action of this part of the saga, with Þorkell hákr suffering grim retribution at the hands of his vengeful adversary. Guðmundr has Þorkell killed with the assistance of

accomplices and a spy called Þorbjörn Rindill, whom it is suggested Guðmundr has been on terms of intimacy with. When Guðmundr takes him on, Rindill announces that he is useless as a workman, does not know how to mow grass, but is happy to go off bathing during the day. He is not up to attacking anyone but well capable of carrying out espionage on Guðmundr's enemies (ch. 18). The account of Guðmundr's revenge includes further reminders of the charge of sexual deviance when Guðmundr topples backwards into a vat of milk. This accident provides Þorkell with a pretext for further mockery about Guðmundr's 'arse having taken a dip from many streams before but never having drunk milk'. With his own guts spilt out around him in battle, he even tauntingly asks Guðmundr whether he does not find them fanciable too (ch. 19)! When the spy Rindill is stabbed through with a spear shortly afterwards, the thin curds (*skyr*) that he has just been eating come gushing out of him (ch. 20), reminding one of the milk previously mentioned and presumably too, in view of the context, the colour of the semen one may suppose he had received inside him from Guðmundr. After this, Guðmundr's vengeful fury becomes so extreme that he wants to burn the killers in the house where they have taken refuge, even though his wife and his son Halldórr (who died at the Battle of Clontarf in Ireland in 1014) are both inside at the time (ch. 20). The saga says that relations between Guðmundr and his wife were never the same again as long as they lived. Guðmundr is now the undisputed leader of the district, but he lives in constant fear of vengeance at the hands of Þorkell's relatives, even seeking news of possible revenge attacks from an oneiromancer and a seeress. He dies suddenly in late old age after receiving a premonition of his fate: his wife brings him some milk to drink, but he finds no heat in it even though she has just warmed it with hot stones (chs 20–21). It is notable that this is the third time milk or milk products are mentioned in the story: in the first two instances the milk is connected with Guðmundr's sexual relations with men; in this last, his wife's gift of warm milk may be seen as her way of expressing her love, but Guðmundr fails to find the heat she has put into it and he dies soon after.

In *Eyrbyggja saga* (ch. 65) and *Heiðarvíga saga* (chs 37–39), we are told that Guðmundr gives hospitality to Barði Guðmundarson after the killings on the heath, a major confrontation in the west of the North Quarter of Iceland in the year 1014. He does this on the instigation of his son Eyjólf, who tells his father that even though Barði cannot pay for his support 'there will be great honour to you in this' (*Heiðarvíga saga*, ch. 38), and then puts his hand across Guðmundr's mouth before the old man can object.

In the saga of King Óláfr Haraldsson, both the so-called *Helgisaga* ('Legendary Saga') and Snorri Sturluson's version in *Heimskringla*, Guðmundr offers hospitality

to King Hrærekr 'at the king's [i.e. Óláfr's] bidding' (*Hkr.* ch. 85) and has him with him over the winter of 1019–20. A few years later, in 1024, Guðmundr acts as spokesman for Óláfr when the King requests possession of the island of Grímsey off the north coast of Iceland. But Guðmundr's brother Einarr, in yet another demonstration of his superior intelligence, speaks out against the proposal and it is rejected (ch. 124). A little later Guðmundr is keen to accept Óláfr's invitation to visit him in Norway, but the proposed journey fails to go ahead (ch. 126).

In *Fóstbræðra saga* and in *Þórarins þáttr ofsa*, a short story preserved in the C-version of *Ljósvetninga saga* though not related to it in subject matter, Guðmundr is involved in the prosecution of Þórarinn ofsi after the slaying of Þorgeirr Hávarsson. The events are related rather differently in the two texts. Þorgeirr had been a courtier of Óláfr Haraldsson and in *Þórarins þáttr* the King sends a message to say that Þórarinn is to be killed for Þorgeirr's death. Unfortunately the end of the *þáttr* is now lost and it is not clear how things went on from there. In *Fóstbræðra saga* Þorgils Arason of Reykhólar enlists Guðmundr's support in the case and, according to chapter 18 of the *Mqðruvallabók* manuscript (AM 132 fol) of the saga, on Þorgils's advice Guðmundr himself pockets half of the compensation payable for Þorgeirr's death. In the same version of the saga we are later told that Þórarinn is killed at a gathering in Eyjafjörður; the *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4^o) version says directly that Guðmundr *ríki* and Þorgils had him killed (ch. 18).

In *Grettis saga*, well on into the hero's long outlawry, Grettir seeks Guðmundr's assistance and Guðmundr advises him to set up on the island of Drangey and rely on no one but himself. This would have been in 1028. Some time after 1030, according to *Bolla þáttr* (ch. 5), Guðmundr invites Bolli Bollason to a feast. This is the last event in Guðmundr's life that the sagas have anything to say about, other than the account of his death in *Ljósvetninga saga* mentioned earlier. In addition to the incidents described above, Guðmundr's name also appears in genealogies in *Svarfdæla saga* (ch. 20, where he is called 'old'), as in *Heiðarvíga saga*, ch. 38), *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar* (ch. 7), and *Þorvalds þáttr víðfjrla* (ch. 1).

Guðmundr *ríki* thus figures in events that take place over a period of nearly half a century. The sagas in which he appears are very different and generally internally unrelated, and many of them seem to assume a level of prior knowledge of his character on the part of their audiences. It is notable that, even though his son is mentioned as a hostage at the time of the conversion and he himself is closely allied with Þorgeirr, the *goði* of the *Ljósvetningar*, there is no mention of the conversion in *Ljósvetninga saga* itself.

In the introduction to his translation of *Ljósvetninga saga*, Theodore Andersson presents an excellent summary of the various ways Guðmundr is portrayed in different sagas and comes to the natural conclusion that this variation can be seen as evidence that there were stories being told about him in association with events and other characters all around the country.¹⁷ How he is portrayed in particular instances was then determined by whoever it was that was telling these stories at the time, local interests, and so on. The views expressed by Paul Schach, on the other hand, provide clear evidence of the way that misconceptions about the nature of oral tradition can mislead people in their conclusions regarding saga characters who, like Guðmundr *ríki*, appear in several written texts.¹⁸ In challenging the ideas of Richard Allen on the oral tradition behind the written sagas,¹⁹ Schach refers to the 'somewhat romantic assumption that a multitude of finished or semi-finished character portraits were stored in some sort of communal memory bank from which they could be retrieved at will'.²⁰ Schach goes on to assume that it is possible to draw a hard and fast line between, on the one hand, the historical information about saga characters found in works like *Landnámabók* and, on the other, the literary characters as they appear in the sagas — a distinction that is highly questionable, as the actual data makes clear. These literary characters, he goes on to claim, were the later creations of literary authors whose work was based chiefly on earlier written accounts. Schach believes that, whenever he finds nothing about this character in the texts he chooses to use as historical sources and hence as a source of the character as it was known in the tradition, it is safe to conclude that a saga character is first and foremost the creation of the author of the written saga.

In short, Schach's reasoning is untenable. It is important for scholars analysing medieval texts to understand various fundamental points about oral tradition and its possibilities. For instance, we have to realize that the textual sources that have come down to us from the Icelandic Middle Ages, though extensive in comparison to what has been preserved elsewhere, cannot contain more than a tiny fragment

¹⁷ Theodore M. Andersson and William Ian Miller, *Law and Literature in Medieval Iceland: Ljósvetninga saga' and 'Valla-Ljóts saga'* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 85–90.

¹⁸ Paul Schach, 'Character Creation and Transformation in the Icelandic Sagas', in *Germanic Studies in Honor of Otto Springer*, ed. by Stephen J. Kaplowitt (Pittsburgh: K&S Enterprises, 1978), pp. 237–79.

¹⁹ Richard Allen, *Fire and Iron: Critical Approaches to Njáls Saga* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971).

²⁰ Schach, 'Character Creation', p. 238.

of the shared totality of what good storytellers and reciters of poetry could have had at their command. Schach's arguments demonstrate the kinds of misconceptions that can cloud the issues when people fail to take account of this. In addition, he succumbs to the common tendency of confusing oral tradition with history and treating them as one and the same thing, ignoring the demonstrable truth that those who tell stories within an oral tradition can be every bit as creative as those who sit at a writing desk to compose their tales. There is nothing 'romantic' about assuming that the audiences of the ancient sagas already knew stories about the characters of the written texts from oral tradition. Obviously they did not all know the stories equally well, and of course not everyone always told them in the same way. The heavy emphasis on the 'author' and his unique creativity, the emphasis of Schach and others, is itself largely the product of nineteenth-century European Romanticism. Variety, fluidity, and amorphousness are the keywords for an oral tradition, whether the tradition is expressed as stories, poems, or other kinds of learning or information.²¹ So, in arguing against a tradition behind written stories, no special significance can be attached to the fact that we get different emphases in characterization (character transformation, to use Schach's term) from one saga to another in the way Schach does when justifying his denial of oral tales about Guðmundr *ríki*. To him, for example, it is significant that the historical Guðmundr — in his words, the 'real' Guðmundr — was clearly 'a man of eminence',²² that he is spoken of with honour and respect in *Valla-Ljóts saga*, that the charges of *ergi* are restricted to *Qlkofra þáttur* and *Ljósvefninga saga*, and that in *Njáls saga* he is back again on his pedestal of eminence. The fact is that this is precisely what one might expect. Schach's error lies in assuming that the tradition must have supplied only one single picture of a particular person which should then appear unaltered and intact in all the written sagas based on it — a bit like Donald Duck, for example. Variation must then be explained 'on the basis of the artistic or tendentious purpose of the author',²³ and by *author* what he means is the person who wrote the saga, not the one, or any of the ones, who told the story.

²¹ Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, 24 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960; rev. edn 2000); Lauri Honko, 'Thick Corpus and Organic Variation: An Introduction', in *Thick Corpus, Organic Variation and Textuality in Oral Tradition*, ed. by Lauri Honko, Studia Fennica Folkloristica, 7 (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2000), pp. 3–28.

²² Schach, 'Character Creation', p. 265.

²³ Schach, 'Character Creation', p. 276.

The tradition in fact offers a many-voiced and varied picture of characters, in all probability because it is based on memories of real people who were the subject of stories for several generations before it occurred to anyone to use them as material for written works of narrative. This being the case, it is hardly strange if neighbours, those who were most familiar with the personal aspects and private life of the character in question, might tell and have fun telling scurrilous tales centred on his sex life and erotic attachments. As one gets further away, the character's power and family connections might come to play a bigger part in the stories that were told — and eventually written down.

It is also something of an oversimplification on Schach's part to say that *Valla-Ljóts saga* 'depicts Guðmundur as a brave, intelligent man of moderation and integrity'.²⁴ A more interesting characteristic of this saga is that it contains much that suggests it was written against the background of a living tradition, since its writer seems to assume a prior knowledge of his characters, their family connections, and the places they lived. One might even go a step further than speaking solely of the contemporary tradition of the written saga and follow the approach of Björn Sigfússon, who wrote about the Guðmundr sagas as if they were more or less undistorted records of a historical reality.²⁵ We might envisage a historical background in which Guðmundr *ríki* gains control of the chieftaincy (*goðorð*) of the men of Reykjadalur 'in between sagas', and in doing so incurs the unpopularity that lies behind the opprobrium shown to him in the sagas we know today. Björn's article demonstrates how it is possible to use a historical reality and inferred actual events outside the sagas to explain the conflicts described in them — even if few would go so far as him in talking about the events in the sagas as if they were hard facts. Such doubts can be met by appeal to unrecorded oral tales, and we can leave it open as to whether or not they were reliable sources of what actually happened.

The main point here is that there is coherence and consistency in the portrayal of Guðmundr from saga to saga — although he is by no means always the same nor does he always do the same things in the way Schach seems to expect characters drawn from oral tradition to do. Guðmundr is a man of the highest rank with noble connections. There is a tension in his relationship with his brother Einarr, and there is frequent reference to a difference in intelligence between the two of them. Guðmundr wields considerable power and is assertive and intrusive in other people's affairs. He is avaricious. He maintains a coterie of followers around him

²⁴ Schach, 'Character Creation', p. 265.

²⁵ Björn Sigfússon, 'Veldi Guðmundar ríka', *Skírnir*, 108 (1934), 191–98.

and has a particular partiality for men; this leads to calumny, and the conflicts arising from it have a major bearing on how he acts and behaves, both in public life and towards his family when he goes so far as to want to burn them to death in the house where they are staying. Thanks to his kinship connections and his power he is able to advance his own interests, often through force and injustice, in a way that gives temporary satisfaction to the others involved but always at a profit to himself. A recurrent motif is his cowardice, generally associated with *ergi*: he uses and manipulates others to achieve his own ends but his plans misfire badly when, in a fit of anger, he attempts to lay down the law in his own local area. His political power ensures the ultimate success of his long-term schemes, however, even if he is sometimes bested in individual cases by men more cunning than himself. At times he is checked in his excesses by his brother Einarr, who acts as the brains of the operation and stills his wrath when he is in danger of going too far.

Because of his connections with powerful figures in Norway, Earl Hákon and King Óláfr Haraldsson, Guðmundr is forced to pursue dubious cases in Iceland, which he does with a heavy-handed arrogance. At one point he lends his support to a vicious bully, thereby triggering a long-lasting family feud within the house of Ljósavatn in which both he himself and later his son Eyjólfur become embroiled. It is notable that during these years he is portrayed as a close friend and associate of Þorgeirr, the goði of the Ljósvetningar, a man otherwise esteemed for his justice and right-thinking. Later, Guðmundr's position as a courtier of King Óláfr obliges him to seek vengeance for Þorgeirr Hávarsson and to champion the King's cause in the Grímsey affair, in which he is thwarted by his wiser brother. Thus Guðmundr's obligations to foreign rulers create unpopularity for him at home in Iceland. His status on a national level is seen in his son's being held hostage by Óláfr Tryggvason in Norway and his central role in the litigation at the Alþingi following the burning of Njáll. In this latter case, nothing is spared in amplifying his family connections and wealth, and both serve to underline his power and influence. Even when he is an old man, Guðmundr is sought out by the killers Bolli, Barði, and Grettir in times of need and he gives them sound advice or other help.

In this portrayal of Guðmundr's character it cannot be shown that any one saga is the donor and another the recipient. The way he is presented should rather be seen as clear evidence that a substantial body of varying stories circulated about him in oral form and that, as might be expected, these stories were not always precisely dated, and that they were used by those who put together written sagas in the various regions to which his influence extended. The picture we get of Guðmundr is pretty much what we might expect from tales preserved in oral tradition about a man who actually existed and about whom stories were told and collected.

According to the chronology of the sagas, the events he is said to have been involved in follow his age in a perfectly natural manner, with the proviso that there is always, of course, an element of internal inconsistency in the sagas if they are taken absolutely literally on every point, as if they were contemporary records and reliable in all particular details. We may thus go rather further than Andersson²⁶ and attempt to knit the general account given above into a narrative: a life story that enabled people to see various points in Guðmundr's career in their mind's eye and gave them a firm feeling for how he developed as a chieftain and a person.

Guðmundr first appears as an unscrupulous young chieftain on the way up, seemingly around the age of twenty, some time before the year 990. In this period he becomes actively involved in a number of disputes and legal cases across the whole of the North Quarter of Iceland, from Húnaþing in the west to Vopnafjörður in the east. His prime motivation is profit, without any regard for justice or equity. In the next decade, aged around thirty, he is close friends with his neighbour, the lawspeaker Þorgeirr, the *goði* of the Ljósvetningar, and together they show a wilful contempt for the demands of society in their avarice and their compliance with the dictates of Earl Hákon in Norway. Guðmundr's subsequent career is marked by intransigence, greed, ambition, and a lack of prudence and foresight; at the same time he is tarred by accusations of *ergi*, for which, once he reaches his forties, he has the power to exact grim retribution, even when the person in question is the son of his friend Þorgeirr, the former lawspeaker. Still in his forties, Guðmundr enjoys so much power and fear-tinged respect that when he becomes involved in a very complex legal dispute at the Alþingi he can turn it to his own advantage through a mixture of his undisputed influence and political guile. In the latter part of his life Guðmundr sits at home at Mqðruvellir in the comfort of his wealth and authority. As he approaches his sixties, his vanity as a courtier of the King of Norway forces him into a role in public affairs, and he comes to learn the hard way that serving the interests of foreign rulers can lead to unpopularity at home in Iceland. From sixty onwards, he lends support to convicted malefactors without fear of the consequences. He can now clearly do exactly as he wants; he no longer needs to look to profit out of particular cases and can put his mind to building up his honour and prestige, his reputation and his status within society.

²⁶ Andersson and Miller, *Law and Literature*, pp. 85–90.

It is hardly surprising that later readers of the sagas, both scholars and the general public, have frequently been willing to put their trust in memories that come from a tradition which provides such a coherent and fully formed image of a known individual from the past as that of Guðmundr *ríki*. Guðmundr has not been converted into a monodimensional story character. Quite the opposite: he comes across as a multifaceted personality, though always with certain underlying traits that help to mark him out. He is a son, a brother, a father and a family man who stands upon his honour, an intemperate and passionate lover, a chieftain embroiled in an unforgiving power struggle, vain, ambitious and assertive, well connected by birth and marriage, powerful and autocratic, but at the same time living in constant fear for his life in a hard world in which both he and others are often more inclined to let their weapons do the talking than look to the law. Guðmundr's saga is nowhere told as a whole, but those sagas in which he does appear often assume prior knowledge on the part of their audiences of the details of his life. He is invariable spoken of with a mixture of honour and mockery. He is enormously powerful but short on justice and fair-mindedness, particularly in his own home region. He is ruled by greed and arrogance and suffers unremitting censure on account of his *ergi*. While this picture runs through the sagas in which he appears, it must not be forgotten that each of the written sagas is an independent work and sets Guðmundr within a context of varied events that leave ample room for narrative conventions and the artistic capabilities of the individual writers to express themselves. But this scope for variety does not alter the fact that we can identify an overall development and consistency of thought behind his character as it appears in these different sources. We may suppose that the audiences of the sagas had a perception of the overall picture of Guðmundr similar to that presented here. And accounting for this overall picture becomes very problematical unless we allow that it was built up out of material derived from shared memories of an actual person, Guðmundr *ríki* Eyjólfsson of Möðruvellir in Eyjafjörður, who succeeded his father some time late in the tenth century and remained one of the most influential men in the country well into the eleventh century.

THE ART OF POETRY AND THE SAGAS OF ICELANDERS

Guðrún Nordal

Skaldic poetry holds an ambiguous place in medieval saga scholarship. We know that skaldic poetry was appreciated and revered in the literary culture of Scandinavia from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries, but today it is the one medieval genre most alien to modern aesthetics. We have still to appreciate fully the significant role played by skaldic verse in Icelandic medieval learning, in the evolution of the unique prosimetric form of the Icelandic sagas, and in the nurturing of religious sentiment in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.¹ Skaldic verse is commonly attributed in the sources to named poets some of whom gained social, cultural, and pecuniary recognition for their art, whereas the writers of the sagas remain unnamed, unacknowledged, and unknown. In my view skaldic verse-making and the theorizing of the skaldic art were crucial for the growth of saga writing in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and fundamental to the building of a bridge between the pagan heritage of the north and Christian learning.² The practice of skaldic verse-making went hand in hand with the writing of medieval Icelandic sagas, and the demise of skaldic verse-making in Iceland at the end of the fourteenth century coincided with the closing stages in the writing of sagas about Scandinavian kings, legendary heroes, and the first generations of Icelanders. This correlation is probably no coincidence.

¹ The forthcoming edition of religious skaldic poetry, edited by Margaret Clunies Ross as volume VII of *The Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages*, will make clear the importance of religious skaldic poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries to a wider audience.

² See Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), pp. 19–40, where I discuss the importance of skaldic verse in the learning and social culture of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

When skaldic stanzas can be securely attributed to tenth- and eleventh-century poets they remain the most distinctly oral legacy in the written sagas of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, perhaps the only authentic voices in the text. Notwithstanding, or rather due to their roots in a datable and often pagan past, the learned scholars of the thirteenth century used them as the only indigenous counterparts to Latin verses in the grammatical tradition and they became the accepted sources in the official chronicles of the Scandinavian kings. Of all the medieval native genres, poetic or non-poetic, it is the one genre most firmly linked to the scholastic tradition in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Poetry, composed in skaldic and eddic metres, is woven into all of the earliest saga types:³ used as sources in the earliest kings' sagas (such as *Heimskringla*),⁴ as an integral part of the narrative in the earliest datable sagas of Icelanders (*Egils saga*), regardless of the authenticity of the verse, and in the *fornaldarsögur* (*Völsunga saga*). However, and equally importantly, it is necessary to caution against a simplified representation of the role of verse in the sagas. The use of skaldic verse in the sagas of Icelanders remained a matter of authorial preference, and some writers did not accept the skaldic tradition as fundamental to their depiction of the past but chose instead a different narrative model and a point of reference for their sagas, possibly influenced by imported literary prototypes, such as hagiography or romance. The rejection of skaldic verse in the sagas is as revealing for the development of Icelandic saga writing as the choice of the prosimetric form.

It is striking that half of the sagas of Icelanders are interlaced with verse in the narrative, whereas the other half include fewer than five stanzas and many indeed none. If the distribution of verse in the sagas is analyzed more closely, we notice that the differences are geographically, culturally, and even thematically determined.⁵ The following list of verse citations is based on the standard edition of the sagas

³ Snorri Sturluson treated both eddic and skaldic metres in his metrical treatise *Háttatal*. On the classification of early Icelandic poetry, see, for example, Hermann Pálsson, 'Towards a Classification of Early Icelandic Poetry', in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages, Atti del 12° Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, ed. by Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 1990), pp. 59–65. Skaldic verse was not cited as part of narratives of foreign origin or of those relating events in foreign parts, such as in courtly romances or saints' lives.

⁴ Skaldic verse was also used as source material in the Latin chronicles of the Scandinavian kings, *Historia de antiquitate regum Norwagiensium* by Theodoricus and *Gesta Danorum* by Saxo Grammaticus, as the authors reveal in their prologues; these early writers make no attempt to translate the verses into Latin.

⁵ Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 135.

of Icelanders (Íslenzk fornrit, published by Hið íslenska fornritafélag, Reykjavík), but it should be noted that in some cases there is a marked divergence in the number of stanzas quoted in each saga between different manuscripts. The most fascinating case is the manuscript transmission of *Njáls saga*, where there are thirty so-called additional stanzas in the first part of the saga in the earliest complete manuscripts, such as in *Reykjabók* (AM 468 4^o) and *Kálfalekjarbók* (AM 133 fol).

Table 1: Verse citations in the Sagas of Icelanders

< 5 stanzas	> 5 stanzas
<i>Bandamanna saga</i> K (1)	<i>Bandamanna saga</i> M (6)
<i>Eiríks saga rauða</i> (3)	<i>Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss</i> (6)
<i>Finnboga saga ramma</i> (0)	<i>Bjarnar saga Hítðlakappa</i> (39)
<i>Fljótsdæla saga</i> (0)	<i>Droplaugarsona saga</i> (6)
<i>Flóamanna saga</i> (1)	<i>Egils saga</i> (60 + longer poems)
<i>Grænlandinga saga</i> (0)	<i>Eyrbyggja saga</i> (37)
<i>Gull-Þóris saga</i> (<i>Þorskfirðinga saga</i>) (0)	<i>Fóstbræðra saga</i> (44)
<i>Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfjfls</i> (0)	<i>Gísla saga Súrssonar</i> (39 short version; 38 longer version)
<i>Hrafnkels saga</i> (0)	<i>Grettis saga</i> (72)
<i>Hænsa-Þóris saga</i> (0)	<i>Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu</i> (25)
<i>Kjalnesinga saga</i> (0)	<i>Hallfreðar saga</i> (33 <i>M</i> -version; 24 <i>Ó</i> -version)
<i>Króka-Refs saga</i> (3)	<i>Harðar saga ok Hólmverja</i> (19)
<i>Laxdæla saga</i> (4)	<i>Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings</i> (15)
<i>Ljósvetninga saga</i> (0)	<i>Heiðarvíga saga</i> (17)
<i>Reykðæla saga</i> (1)	<i>Kormáks saga</i> (85)
<i>Valla-Ljóts saga</i> (0)	<i>Njáls saga</i> (23 stanzas plus the poem <i>Darraðarljóð</i> in <i>M</i> version). More stanzas in the <i>Reykjabók</i> and <i>Kálfalekjarbók</i> manuscripts of the saga.
<i>Vatnsdæla saga</i> (0)	<i>Svarfdæla saga</i> (17)
<i>Vápnfirðinga saga</i> (0)	<i>Víga-Glúms saga</i> (13)
<i>Þorsteins saga hvíta</i> (0)	<i>Víglundar saga</i> (22)
<i>Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar</i> (0)	<i>Þórðar saga hreðu</i> (9)
<i>Ólkofra saga</i> (0)	
<i>Þorskfirðinga saga</i> (<i>Gull-Þóris saga</i>) (0)	

By analysing the skaldic citations in these forty sagas it may be possible to identify different attitudes to verse-making and its social functions in the thirteenth and

fourteenth centuries, and to throw into relief specific thematic preferences and narrative methods of each saga.

Modern scholars have approached the categorization of the sagas from different angles, and I will mention here three such approaches. Sigurður Nordal attempted a grouping based on the balance between the historical and the fantastic in each saga and suggested a time line for the writing of the sagas from the beginning of the thirteenth century to c. 1400. His division of the sagas into five groups is based on the chronology in the writing of the sagas.⁶ Vésteinn Ólason, in the most recent Icelandic literary history, categorized the sagas into three groups according to their subject matter and time of writing: early sagas c. 1200–80; classical sagas c. 1240–1300, and late sagas c. 1300–1450.⁷ Most recently, Theodore Andersson has attempted to define more clearly the relationship of early sagas (1180–1280) to the kings' sagas in respect of their artistic development. He suggests three types of sagas which are particularly frequent: the biographical mode, the regional or chronicle saga, and the feud or conflict saga.⁸

On the basis of the use of skaldic verse in the narrative it is tempting to sketch an alternative division of the sagas of Icelanders and consider whether it is tenable to use skaldic verse as one of the defining factors in the writing of the sagas. By doing so, an account is taken of the artistic preference for skaldic poetry in the sagas, and its importance in the structuring of the narrative. The guiding principle behind this classification of the sagas is whether or not the saga is prosimetric, whether or not there is one principal poet (or speaker of verse) in the saga, and how many stanzas, if any, there are in the saga. The answers to these questions throw into relief six groups of sagas of Icelanders:

1. Sagas of court poets (the skalds' sagas): *Bjarnar saga Hítðelakappa*, *Egils saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga orms tungu*, *Hallfredar saga*, and *Kormáks saga*.

⁶ Sigurður Nordal, 'Sagalitteraturen', in *Litteraturhistorie*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Nordisk kultur, 8B (Stockholm: Bonnier, 1953), p. 235.

⁷ Vésteinn Ólason, 'Family Sagas', in *A Companion to Old-Norse Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 101–18 (pp. 114–16); see also his discussion in 'Íslendingasögur og þættir', in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. II, ed. by Böðvarr Guðmundsson, Sverrir Tómasson, Torfi H. Tulinius, and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1993), pp. 23–163.

⁸ Theodore M. Andersson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), p. 17.

2. Sagas where the main protagonist is a poet: *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfirðings*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Víglundar saga*, and *Þórðar saga breðu*.
3. Sagas with a strong royal or courtly emphasis: *Finnboga saga ramma*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Vatnsdæla saga*.
4. Sagas dated to the fourteenth century and with a clear thematic interest: *Bandamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Þorskfirðinga saga* (*Gull-Þóris saga*), and also *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlandinga saga*.
5. Sagas relating events in the Eastfjords and the north-east of Iceland: *Drop-laugarsona saga*, *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Vápnfirðinga saga*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Ólkofra saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Reykðæla saga*, and *Valla-Ljóts saga*.
6. Sagas where verse is an integral part of the narrative even though there is no principal poet: *Njáls saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Heiðarvíga saga*, and *Svarfdæla saga*.

This division is not based on the dating of the sagas, or on the sagas' subject matter, even though noteworthy similarities emerge within each group, but rather on the narrative technique of each saga. This grouping will be tested below, where possible, against the testimony of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century manuscripts, which were put together in the period when the writing of the sagas and skaldic verse-making still thrived in Iceland.

Group 1: Sagas of Court Poets

The six skalds' sagas are *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa*, *Egils saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Gunnlaugs saga ormstungu*, *Hallfredar saga*, and *Kormáks saga*. Margaret Clunies Ross has written a fine definition of this group of sagas and argued persuasively for the exclusion of other sagas where there is one principal speaker of verse (such as *Gísla saga* and *Grettis saga*).⁹ The poets in the skalds' sagas are acknowledged and respected poets in the skaldic canon and their verse is cited in *Snorra Edda* and the kings' sagas. However, the poetry in the sagas of Icelanders is not drawn from the same poetic corpus as the poetry in the kings' sagas, and, in fact, there is

⁹ Margaret Clunies Ross, 'The Skald Sagas as a Genre: Definitions and Typical Features', in *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. by Russell G. Poole (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), pp. 25–49.

surprisingly little overlap between the skaldic poetry in the sagas of Icelanders, on the one hand, and the kings' sagas and the poetic treatises, on the other.¹⁰ The choice of stanzas highlights the generic borderline between the verse in the sagas of Icelanders and the kings' sagas.

The manuscript transmission of the skalds' sagas underscores their affinity as a group, as well as their close relation to the kings' sagas of the fourteenth century, a fact also noted by Clunies Ross. Three of the sagas are integrated into the two long Olaf sagas in the fourteenth century. *Hallfreðar saga* is interpolated into *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* in *Flateyjarbók* (AM 61 fol) and in other manuscripts of the saga. Sections of *Bjarnar saga Hitdælakappa* are found in the *Bæjarbók* manuscript (AM 73 b fol) of *Ólafs saga helga*, written c. 1400, along with additional chapters from *Laxdæla saga* and *Fóstbræðra saga*. One fragment of *Bjarnar saga* (AM 162 F fol) may have belonged to the same medieval codex as a fragment from *Kormáks saga* which would bring these two sagas together in the fourteenth century. *Fóstbræðra saga* is interpolated into *Ólafs saga helga* in *Flateyjarbók*, and it is the only one of the sagas of Icelanders, apart from *Eiríks saga rauða*, to be preserved in *Hauksbók* (AM 544 4°), the anthology of the learned lawman Haukr Erlendsson compiled c. 1302–10.

Egils saga and *Gunnlaugs saga* have two important features in common, apart from focussing on the same family. Verse by Egill or Gunnlaugr is not used as source material in the kings' sagas, and neither saga is integrated into the fourteenth-century compilations of kings' sagas. *Egils saga* is preserved complete in two fourteenth-century manuscripts, in *Mqðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol), along with ten other sagas of Icelanders, and in the Wolfenbüttel manuscript (WolfAug 9 10 4°) with *Eyrbyggja saga* (see Group 6). *Gunnlaugs saga* and *Heiðarvígá saga* (see Group 6), which makes ingenious use of skaldic verse, are preserved together in Holm perg 18 4°, dated to the middle of the fourteenth century.¹¹ However, the

¹⁰ This fact was noted by Bjarne Fidjestøl, 'On a New Edition of Scaldic Poetry', in *The Sixth International Saga Conference* 28. 7.–2. 8. 1985: *Workshop Papers* (Copenhagen: Det Arnamagnæanske Institut, 1985), pp. 319–35. See also Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 78–79. In the design of the new skaldic edition it has been possible to divide the corpus according to the origin of citation as there is very little overlap in the manuscript transmission of the poetry.

¹¹ This manuscript is of three different origins: *Gunnlaugs saga* and *Heiðarvígá saga* belonged originally in the same manuscript, but *Hrólfs saga Gautrekssonar* and *Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar* by Oddr Snorrasonar were bound with them later. See Ólafur Halldórsson, 'Formáli', in *Færeyinga saga, Ólafs saga Tryggvasonar eftir Odd Snorrason*, ed. by Ólafur Halldórsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 25 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2006), pp. cxliv–cxlv, and Bjarni Einarsson, 'Introduction', in *The Saga of Gunnlaug Serpent-Tongue and Three other Sagas: Perg 4:0 nr. 18 in the Royal*

relations between the sagas of Icelanders and other saga types change in the transmission patterns of the fifteenth century. One example highlights this change. *Gunnlaugs saga* is included in AM 557 4° which was written by Óláfr Loptsson c. 1420–50, alongside *Hallfreðar saga* and *Eiríks saga rauða* and nine other texts (*Valdimars saga*, *Hrafn's saga*, *Rognvalds þáttir ok Rauðs*, *Dámusta saga*, *Hróa þáttir heimiska*, *Eiríks saga víðfjrla*, and three *þættir*).¹² This manuscript throws into relief the reassessment of the sagas of Icelanders in the fifteenth century when they are placed in a new textual environment.

Group 2: Sagas Where the Main Protagonist is a Poet

Seven sagas are distinguished by one principal poet or a speaker of verse: *Gísla saga Súrssonar*, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga ok Hólmverja*, *Hávarðar saga Ísfrðings*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Víglundar saga*, and *Þórðar saga breðu*. It is noteworthy that Víga-Glúmr is among the acknowledged poets of the canon in *Snorra Edda*, cited four times in *Skáldskaparmál* in the Codex Regius manuscript (GKS 2367 4°), whereas Grettir Ásmundarson and Hávarðr are cited only once.¹³ The authors of the poetic treatises never refer to Gísli Súrsson's verse, nor to the poetry by Hqrðr, Víglundr, and Þórðr breða. None of the poets in this group is cited in the corpus of kings' sagas.

In all of these sagas skaldic poetry plays a crucial role in building up a portrait of the main hero of the saga, in the same way as is done in the traditional skalds' sagas. The hero finds an emotional outlet for his internal turmoil through poetic utterances at crucial points in the saga. These seven sagas are characterized by the hero's tragic fate or adverse circumstances.¹⁴ The hero is outlawed (Gísli, Grettir, Hqrðr) or cast from his family estate (Víg-Glúmr and Þórðr breða). The manuscript transmission highlights the sagas' affinity with one another, but the earliest complete manuscripts are from the fifteenth century. The three outlaws' sagas, *Grettis saga*, *Harðar saga*, and *Gísla saga*, are preserved together in AM 556 a 4°

Library Stockholm, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson, *Early Icelandic Manuscripts in Facsimile*, 16 (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1986), pp. 11–18.

¹² See Stefán Karlsson, 'Ritun Reykjarfjarðarbókar. Excursus: Bókagerð bænda', *Opuscula*, 4 (1970), 120–40 (pp. 137–38).

¹³ Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 78–79.

¹⁴ See Heather O'Donoghue's discussion of the force of poetry in *Gísla saga* and *Grettis saga* in *Skaldic Verse and the Poetics of Saga Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 136–227.

from the latter part of the fifteenth century. Fragments of *Víga-Glúms saga* and *Gísla saga*, now preserved in AM 445 c I 4°, seem to have belonged to *Pseudo-Vatnsþýrna*.¹⁵ The portrayal of Víglundr is akin to that of the love-poets of *Hallfreðar saga* and *Kormáks saga*, but Víglundr's saga ends happily, suggesting the saga's affinity with romance.

In *Þórðar saga hreðu* the eponymous hero is in conflict with the main chieftain in the area, Miðfjarðar-Skeggi, but he is also successful in standing up for himself at the end of the saga. The stanzas serve to place him at the centre of the narrative, despite the attempts of the influential chieftain to drive him out of the region. *Þórðar saga* was in the *Pseudo-Vatnsþýrna* manuscript, but the preservation of another version of the saga in the fifteenth century places the saga contextually with *Króka-Refs saga*. *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Króka-Refs saga*, and *Kjalnesinga saga* are all preserved together in AM 471 4° alongside three *fornaldarsögur* (*Orvar-Odds saga*, *Ketils saga hængs*, and *Gríms saga loðinkinna*) and *Viktors saga ok Blávus*. *Króka-Refs saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* are preserved in AM 586 4° in the company of *fornaldarsögur*, *riddarasögur*, and medieval fables. A fragment of *Þórðar saga* is also preserved in AM 551 d β 4° written c. 1400, with *Áróns saga Hjörleifssonar*. *Króka-Refs saga* and *Þórðar saga hreðu* are preserved in Holm perg. 8 4°.

Group 3: Sagas with a Strong Royal or Courtly Emphasis

Theodore Andersson has pointed out a special thematic relationship between *Laxdæla saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* (as did Einar Ól. Sveinsson in his edition of the latter saga)¹⁶ — their common interest in a Norwegian royal backdrop and in portraying strong and unassailable chieftains in the region: '[the sagas betray] the same taste for style and grandeur'.¹⁷ Neither Andersson nor Einar Ól. Sveinsson comments on the sagas' lack of interest in skaldic verse, but by avoiding references to skaldic verse in connection with their heroes the author of each narrative

¹⁵ A fragment of *Svarfdæla saga* from the fifteenth century (AM 445 c II 4°) is also bound in this codex though it did not belong in *Pseudo-Vatnsþýrna* originally. On AM 445 c I 4°'s relation to *Pseudo-Vatnsþýrna*, see John McKinnell, 'Pseudo-Vatnsþýrna', *Opuscula*, 4 (1970), 304–37 (pp. 331–34).

¹⁶ See Einar Ól. Sveinsson, 'Formáli', in *Vatnsdæla saga*, Íslensk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1939), p. 26.

¹⁷ Andersson, *Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, p. 155. Andersson does not, however, place these two sagas in the same category.

succeeds in giving the sagas their distinctive royal emphasis, a trait indicating their stylistic descent from romances. Skaldic verse did not fit into the new courtly framework in Norway in the late thirteenth century; the last known court poets are from the late thirteenth century.¹⁸

Finnboga saga belongs with *Laxdæla saga* and *Vatnsdæla saga* in this category. The saga is preserved in the *Mqðruvallabók* manuscript alongside *Laxdæla saga*, among others, and offers a different point of view on the dispute between the Viðdælir and Vatnsdælir to the one proposed by the author of *Vatnsdæla saga*.¹⁹ Sagas originating in the west and north-west of Iceland either contain a great number of verses (such as in the six skalds' sagas), or none at all. In sagas focussed on this area the poetic preference seems to be determined by narratological choice, or cultural or ideological considerations. The difference between *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Laxdæla saga* is a case in point.

Laxdæla saga and *Eyrbyggja saga* were written in the middle of the thirteenth century in the west of Iceland. There is a reference in the last chapter of *Eyrbyggja saga* to *Laxdæla saga*, which may suggest that the former succeeded the latter.²⁰ These two authors make divergent use of the corpus of skaldic verse and this is paralleled by their contrasting attitudes to their subject matter. The author of *Laxdæla saga* knew, or knew of, long poems about characters in the saga, such as Arnórr jarlaskáld's poem about Gellir Þorkelsson, but he refrains from citing any stanza from the poem, whereas the writer of *Eyrbyggja saga* cites examples from such poems known to him (see below, Group 6). The choice, or the omission, of skaldic verse indicates authorial preference which may depend on the intended audience of each saga.

The four stanzas in *Laxdæla saga* serve to undermine the importance of the skaldic art in a saga narrative.²¹ The first stanza, in *fornyrðislag*, is spoken by the bedridden Hólmǫngu-Bersi when he looks at his new foster-son, the infant Halldór, son of Óláfr pá Hǫskuldsson, and compares the immobility of both of them. The remaining three are cited in connection with Þorgils Hǫlluson, who is represented as a man belonging to the old social order, not responsive to the

¹⁸ Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, pp. 127–30.

¹⁹ Gísli Sigurðsson, *Túlkun Íslendingasagna í ljósi munnlegrar hefðar: Tilgáta um aðferð* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2002), pp. 307–18.

²⁰ It is, of course, impossible to ascertain whether the reference to *Laxdæla* is to the written text of the saga, or if it was originally in *Eyrbyggja*.

²¹ Five verses are numbered in the Íslensk fornrit edition; verse number 2 is the two-line comment by Auðr: *vel er ek veit þat, var ek ein um látin* (ch. 35).

sophisticated intrigues of Guðrún and Snorri *goði*. Þorgils composes a stanza after he has done Guðrún the service of avenging the death of her husband Bolli. The stanza is composed in the simple style of *áttmælt*, where each line comprises a complete sentence. Each line has end-rhyme. The metre may have been chosen to indicate Þorgils's straightforward manner. The last two stanzas are spoken to Þorgils by supernatural beings. The poetic recitations reveal him to be a man of the past who cannot speak his mind, and they contribute to his negative, even comic, portrayal in the saga.

Skaldic verse in *Laxdæla saga* — or the absence of skaldic verse — shows that the author is not looking for cultural associations in the world of Icelandic indigenous traditions, but instead he is looking to the conventions of courtly romance. The style of the saga also suggests that the author is addressing an audience who appreciated new types of sagas.²² All the verse is simple in style, which suggests an audience not trained in skaldic verse-making. Skaldic art was given a prominent place in this society while it was practised, encouraged, and enjoyed by prominent members of society, and this lasted until the end of the fourteenth century. The evidence of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century sagas, however, shows that the taste for skaldic verse, particularly when it was quoted within prose narratives, was not shared by everyone writing in this textual culture. The case of *Laxdæla saga* is a particularly revealing one, as the saga originates in the skaldic milieu of the Sturlungs.

Group 4: Sagas Dated to the Fourteenth Century and with a Learned Interest

This group consists of sagas that are traditionally dated to the fourteenth century: *Bandamanna saga*, *Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Þorskfirðinga saga* (*Gull-Þóris saga*), and the two Vinland sagas, *Eiríks saga rauða* and *Grænlandinga saga*. These sagas are not generally structured according to the classic feud pattern, nor are they primarily interested in unveiling moral or legal dilemmas in a close knit Icelandic farming context (*Hænsa-Þóris saga* is clearly an exception). Even though the sagas open with the traditional setting of the Icelandic countryside, in some of them a significant proportion of the narrative is played out outside the farming community in

²² See Ármann Jakobsson's discussion of the royal character of *Laxdæla saga* and further reference there: 'Konungasagan Laxdæla', *Skírnir*, 172 (1997), 357–83.

Iceland, most often abroad in, for example, Norway, Greenland (*Króka-Refs saga*, *Flóamanna saga*, *Eiríks saga*, and *Grænlandinga saga*), and Vinland (*Grænlandinga saga*, *Eiríks saga*), but in some cases in a quasi-mythological setting with giants in the mountains (*Kjalnesinga saga* and *Bárðar saga*). *Hænsa-Þóris saga* and *Bandamanna saga* are moral tales, 'pondering justice' as Theodore M. Andersson puts it, where the writers throw into relief social injustice and present a critique and discussion of unjust chieftains; as such they are perhaps better classified as a separate group with *Hrafnkels saga*.²³ I have resisted such a grouping even though these three short sagas have several thematic and narrative features in common. In my classification of the sagas, *Hrafnkels saga* belongs squarely with the other sagas of the Eastfjords.

Bárðar saga Snæfellsáss is placed in this group even though there are more than five stanzas in the saga. Two stanzas are spoken by Bárðr's daughter Helga before she floats off on an iceberg to Greenland. She speaks them to herself in private; they are not part of a dialogue nor do they contain a commentary on the saga's action. Two stanzas are spoken by the giantess Hetta, and one by Þórir at Öxnakelda after he has wrestled with the troll Torfár-Kolla. The last stanza quoted in the saga is spoken within a burial mound. *Bárðar saga* is not a typical saga of Icelanders in its treatment of subject matter or setting; it resides on the borderline of the *fornaldarsögur*, and the stanzas highlight this. *Bárðar saga* is preserved in the fifteenth-century manuscript AM 489 4° along with *fornaldarsögur* (*Hrings ok Tryggvasaga*) and *riddarasögur* (*Kirjalax saga*, *Saga af Flóres ok Blankiflúr*, *Tristrams saga*, and *Ívens saga*).

The sagas in this group are noteworthy for the unusual attributes of the main characters (for example Þorgils breastfeeds; unusual craftsmanship saves Króka-Refr's life), but despite their supernatural focus and exotic setting some scholars have pointed to their distinctly learned character. Their supernatural character does not necessarily indicate late dating. Two of the sagas — *Kjalnesinga saga* and *Flóamanna saga* — have been associated with Haukr Erlendsson, and if this attribution is correct, they could have been written as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century.²⁴ *Eiríks saga* is also preserved in *Hauksbók*, written by and for Haukr. *Króka-Refs saga* is an exemplum, an animal fable. The author cites three

²³ Andersson, *Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas*, p. 162.

²⁴ See Helgi Guðmundsson, *Um Kjalnesinga sögu: Nokkrar athuganir*, *Studia Islandica*, 26 (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1967), pp. 77–83, and Richard Perkins, *Flóamanna saga, Gaulverjabær and Haukr Erlendsson*, *Studia Islandica*, 36 (Reykjavík: Menningarsjóður, 1978), pp. 28–44.

stanzas by Króka-Refr, but the most noteworthy learned ploy in the saga is Króka-Refr's speech to the Norwegian king, Haraldr *harðráði* Sigurðsson, where skaldic diction is taken out of its poetic context and placed in the prose narrative. The amalgamation of the narrative prose of the sagas of Icelanders and the convoluted imagery of the skaldic art is unsettling in the saga's narrative and unnerving for the reader and listener. The speech is spoken at a large gathering, but the King alone unravels Króka-Refr's intricate diction. This clever scene puts a spin on the traditional depiction of the exclusive relationship between the poet and the king in the sagas.

Group 5: Sagas About Events in the Eastfjords and the North-east of Iceland

Only seven stanzas are cited in sagas depicting events in the north-east (east of Eyjafjörður) and the Eastfjords. Why is this so? Was the practice of skaldic verse-making limited to certain parts of the country, and not exercised in this geographically distinctive part of Iceland? The relevant sagas are *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Fljótsdæla saga*, *Gunnars saga Keldugnúpsfífls*, *Hrafnkels saga*, *Vápnfirdinga saga*, *Þorsteins saga hvíta*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, and *Ólkofra saga* in the Eastfjords, and *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Reykðæla saga* (the only stanza in this saga is also cited in *Víga-Glúms saga*), and *Valla-Ljóts saga* in the north-east of Iceland. The unique character of this region in medieval literary culture is not limited to the sagas of Icelanders. The same regional distinctiveness is born out by the geographic distribution of the known origins of poets in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, in the period when the sagas were put into writing,²⁵ as well as in the poetry cited in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* (though Óláfr Þórðarson's choice of examples may have been determined by his own regional knowledge).²⁶ The exclusion of skaldic poetry in these sagas is possibly regionally determined rather than aesthetically conditioned.

The only exception among the sagas of the Eastfjords is *Droplaugarsona saga* where there are six verses, one spoken by Helgi Ásbjarnarson cited after he has killed Helgi Droplaugarson, and a five-stanza sequence by Grímr Droplaugarson after he has avenged his brother by killing Helgi. These stanzas are quoted within three chapters in the saga and mark the saga's climax: the killing of Helgi

²⁵ Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy*, p. 133.

²⁶ Gísli Sigurðsson, *Túlkun Íslendingasagna*, pp. 118–20.

Ásbjarnarson, where the life of Grímr — described in the saga as *hljóðláttr ok stilltr vel* ('quiet and in control') — takes a tragic turn. *Droplaugarsona saga* and *Ólkofra saga* are the only sagas of the Eastfjords preserved in fourteenth-century manuscripts in the company of sagas originating in the west of Iceland. They are contained in the famous *Mǫðruvallabók* manuscript (see below). *Ljósvetninga saga* and *Reykðæla saga* are preserved in AM 561 4° alongside *Þorskfirðinga saga* (which contains no verse). A fragment of *Ljósvetninga saga* is also in AM 162 C 1 fol from the fifteenth century, alongside a fragment of *Droplaugarsona saga*.

It may only be coincidence, but it is conspicuous nevertheless, that the studies of Gísli Sigurðsson and Tommy Danielsson on the oral character of the sagas of Icelanders have focussed on the *Austfirðinga sögur* and non-poetic sagas. Gísli analyses the sagas of the Eastfjords but discusses at length the Vinland sagas (which contain only three stanzas in all), *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, and *Finnboga saga* (which contain none). And *Hrafnkels saga* is at the heart of Danielsson's study.²⁷

Group 6: Sagas Where Verse is an Integral Part of the Narrative

The remaining four sagas containing skaldic verse, *Njáls saga*, *Heiðarviga saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, and *Svarfdæla saga*, use poetic citations as an integral part of the narrative; the poetry is neither the platform on which the main hero gives memorable soliloquies nor is the verse spread thinly in the narrative. *Svarfdæla saga* is the odd saga out in this company, yet it has narrative themes in common with *Njáls saga* (the depiction of Yngvildr *fagrinn*) and *Eyrbyggja saga* (the description of the ghost *Klaufi*). All four sagas cite verse by known poets of the canon. In *Njáls saga*, *Heiðarviga saga*, and *Eyrbyggja saga*, such verses are used to authenticate the account, and in *Svarfdæla saga*, two stanzas are attributed to the well-known poet Þorleifr *jarlsskáld*. A *þáttr* about Þorleifr is preserved in *Flateyjarbók*. Þorleifr *jarlsskáld* comes within the literary radar of Óláfr Þórðarson and the author of *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, being cited once in each text.

Njáls saga is a fascinating example of the use of skaldic verse in the narrative framework of the *Íslendingasögur*. Twenty-three stanzas and the poem *Darraðarljóð*

²⁷ See Gísli Sigurðsson *Túlkun Íslendingasagna*, and Tommy Danielsson, *Hrafnkels saga eller fallet med den undflyende traditionen* (Hedemora: Gidlund, 2002). Óskar Halldórsson had also chosen *Hrafnkels saga* (see *Uppruni og þema Hrafnkels sögu*, *Fræðirit*, 3 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1973)) as the topic of his influential book on the oral transmission of the sagas.

are common to all manuscripts of the saga. The earliest manuscripts, however, contain additional stanzas which are mainly spoken by the two tragic heroes in the first half of the saga, Gunnarr Hámundarson (twelve stanzas) and Skarpheðinn Njálsson (ten stanzas). The so-called 'additional stanzas' are only quoted in the narrative in the part of the saga set in pagan times (chs 1–99), and they serve to modify the depiction of Gunnarr and Skarpheðinn in the saga in a way similar to the effect of the stanzas by Kári Sölmundarson in the final part of the saga. The author of the saga also cites a poet outside the framework of the saga after the death of Gunnarr Hámundarson, as well as the full-length poem *Darraðarljóð*.²⁸

Fifteen stanzas are preserved in *Heiðarvíg* saga, two in the first part of the saga preserved only in the rendering of the lost text by Jón Ólafsson frá Grunnavík: one stanza by the berserk Leiknir (the same stanza is attributed to his brother Hallr in *Eyrbyggja saga*) and the other attributed to Gestr Oddleifsson (probably lifted from the *Laufásedda* manuscript by Jón Ólafsson, London, British Library. MS Egerton 642). The remaining thirteen stanzas are cleverly woven into the narrative. These stanzas are not used to draw attention to any particular characters but instead emphasize powerful scenes and add credibility to the subject matter. Þuríðr, the wife of Barði Guðmundsson and daughter of Óláfr pá, composes a stanza when she incites her husband to vengeance. Þorbjörn Brúnason speaks two powerful stanzas when his wife serves him a bloody meal in order to incite him to action, and the following night he is visited in his dream by two dream-women who recite two stanzas which he remembers when he wakes up. Gísli Þórgautsson speaks a stanza about his forebodings just before he is killed in Gullteigr. All of these stanzas are related, in one way or another, to the culminating battle, the Heiðarvíg.

The stanzas by Eiríkr víðsjá, who is also known as a respected poet through a citation in *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, are cited as commentary on the action and as testimony to the accuracy of the saga's account of the killings. The writer uses skaldic poetry as source material, in a way similar to its use in kings' sagas, and this technique is also at play in *Eyrbyggja saga*. Eiríkr víðsjá is not the only poet called as a witness to the Heiðarvíg in the saga. Tindr, the brother of Illugi svarti at Gilsbakki (the father of Gunnlaugr *ormstunga*), recites two stanzas

²⁸ I have written extensively on the citation of the additional stanzas in *Njáls saga*; see Guðrún Nordal, 'Attraction of Opposites: Skaldic Verse in Njáls Saga', in *Literacy in Scandinavia from Middle Ages to Early Modern Time*, ed. by Pernille Hermann, Viking Collection, 16 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), pp. 211–36. See also Guðrún Nordal, 'Tilbrigði um Njálu', *Ritið*, 5 (2005), 57–76.

relating to the battle. The authors of *Eyrbyggja saga* and *Heiðarvíg saga* use skaldic poetry to authenticate their account and are careful in choosing respected poets for this purpose.

The author of *Eyrbyggja saga* is bolder than the writer of *Heiðarvíg saga* in his use of skaldic verse as source material. The structure of *Eyrbyggja saga* has seemed flawed and unfocussed to many readers of the saga, but Paul Bibire has shown in a fine essay on the verse in *Eyrbyggja saga* that the thirty-seven stanzas distributed throughout the saga serve as signposts within the labyrinthine narrative of the saga.²⁹ The complicated structure of *Eyrbyggja saga* unfolds when we appreciate the central role of skaldic poetry in the structure of the narrative and the emphasis placed on the main character of the saga, Snorri *goði* Þorgrímsson, and his closest family — his fosterbrothers, Þóroddr and Þorleifr kimbi, and his only sister, Þuríðr Barkardóttir.

The first two stanzas cited in *Eyrbyggja saga* are from *Illugadrápa* composed by Oddr *skáld* about Illugi *svarti*, the father of Gunnlaugr *ormstunga*. The two stanzas describe the dispute between Illugi and Þorgrím Kjallaksson and his sons, one of whom became Snorri *goði*'s father-in-law. A fight breaks out at the assembly, and in the second stanza there is a reference to Snorri *goði*'s role in securing a peaceful solution. The stanzas serve as documentary evidence, just as poetic quotation does in the kings' sagas. Snorri *goði* is the focal point; his leadership talents for the good of the district are substantiated at this early stage in his life. The stanzas are not spoken as part of the narrative, but referred to as source material. With this formal introduction, the presentation of Snorri *goði* as the main character in the saga is affirmed; he is the figure around whom the saga will revolve. The stanzas are not drawn from *lausavísur*, but from a longer, datable and thus reliable poem.

The next sequence of stanzas (3–17) are the famous *Máhlíðingavísur*, by Þórarinn *Máhlíðingr*, the nephew of Arnkell Þórólfsson; they are spoken in three dialogue scenes after the killing at Fróðá of Þorbjörn *digri*, the husband of Þuríðr Barkardóttir, Snorri *goði*'s sister. Þórarinn's poetry is a respected source, and well known in the Sturlungs' learned milieu; a half-stanza is cited in Snorri Sturluson's *Háttatal* in *Snorra Edda*.³⁰ Substantial research has gone into the dating of these

²⁹ Paul Bibire, 'Verses in the Íslendingasögur', in *Alþjóðlegt fornsagnanæming: Reykjavík 2.–8. ágúst 1973: Fyrirlestrar. Second International Saga Conference*, 2 vols (Reykjavík, 1973), 28 pp. separately paginated in vol. I. See also O'Donoghue, *Skaldic Verse*, pp. 78–135.

³⁰ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Háttatal*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 8.

stanzas. Russell Poole concluded that they were composed in the late eleventh or twelfth century in praise of Snorri *goði*'s deeds, and other scholars concur with his assessment.³¹

Interlaced throughout the saga are five laudatory stanzas by Þormóðr Trefilsson from a poem about Snorri *goði* (v. 20, ch. 26; v. 26, ch. 37; v. 33, ch. 44; v. 34, ch. 56; v. 35, ch. 62). The stanzas seem to have originally belonged to the same poem, even though they are introduced in a different way. From mentions in the *Hauksbók* (AM 371 4^o) and *Þórðarþók* texts of *Landnáma*, Þormóðr is known to have composed poetry in praise of Snorri *goði*. These sources postdate *Eyrbyggja saga*, and are not, therefore, of independent value. The stanzas signal Snorri's main battles during his chieftaincy — the first stanza marks the killing of Vigfúss in Drápuhlíð (v. 20, ch. 26) — but Vigfúss had attempted to kill Snorri. The next stanza describes Arnkell Þórólfsson's slaying (v. 26, ch. 37). The third is cited in conjunction with Snorri's dispute with the Eyrbyggjar when he opts for reconciliation. The fourth is quoted when Snorri kills Þorsteinn Gíslason and his son in revenge for the slaying of his father-in-law, Víga-Styrr. The fifth describes the battle at Bitra when Snorri kills Óspakr. The stanzas serve as markers commemorating the most important events in Snorri's rise to a supreme position in the district.

The second long sequence of stanzas is by Björn *Breiðvíkingakappi* (vv. 24–25; vv. 27–31), in which he sings the praise of Snorri's sister, Þuríðr, the wife of Þóroddr of Fróðá. Þuríðr is cast in a role reminiscent of a married courtly lady, known from the troubadour tradition, who is being wooed by a love-sick poet. She is not, however, an uninterested party. Their relationship brings with it grave political problems for Snorri, but he manages to solve the conflict by persuading Björn to leave the country for good. These stanzas are akin to the love stanzas in the skalds' sagas.

Skaldic stanzas are used with precision in *Eyrbyggja* to highlight and elaborate Snorri's character in relation to others on the scene. The stanzas are placed at strategic points in the saga. The verse is carefully chosen, with sequences of formal verse, rather than occasional *lausavísur*, and the reference to praise poems for Snorri *goði* contributes to his aristocratic portrayal in the saga. His worthiness to be celebrated in traditional praise poetry implicitly compares him with earls, or even kings, in other countries. This is no coincidence. Snorri *goði* Þorgrímsson was the forefather of the Sturlungs, and this portrayal may be their own. Another

³¹ Russell Poole, 'The Origins of the Máhlíðingavísur', *Scandinavian Studies*, 57 (1985), 244–85.

source may support such a 'royal' reading of Snorri's life. One of the backbones of the saga is 'The life of Snorri goði', a brief synopsis of his life, preserved in one of the manuscripts containing *Eyrbyggja* (*Melabók*, AM 445 b 4^o) which belonged to the *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna* manuscript. This biographical outline has been attributed to Ari Þorgilsson, and if this is correct, this short text would bring writings about Snorri goði into the same context as the beginning of royal historiography in Iceland.

The division of the sagas of Icelanders into six groups, depending on the role of skaldic poetry in each saga, does not take into consideration the dating of the sagas, nor the authenticity of the verse. The skalds' sagas contain poetry which can be authenticated, as Kari Gade has shown, and stanzas in some of the others, for example *Njáls saga*, *Gísla saga*, and *Eyrbyggja saga*, have been thought to be early.³² Some of the poets quoted in sagas belong to the respected canon constituted by the learned tradition of the poetic treatises, even though the stanzas in the kings' sagas and *Snorri Edda* are not drawn from the same poetic corpus as the verse in the sagas of Icelanders. The new timeline for some of the thirteenth-century sagas proposed by Theodore M. Andersson is not in conflict with the grouping suggested in this paper. The manuscripts remain our safest verification of the dating of the sagas, but there are large gaps in the manuscript transmission.

The classification of the sagas of Icelanders is always problematic, particularly when employing this kind of 'posthumous' assessment of them. The sagas were certainly categorized during the period in which they were written, and medieval manuscripts can provide us with the context within which some sagas were transmitted. This context may possibly have been formed out of an appreciation of the generic characteristics of the sagas, but this appreciation seems to have changed from one century to the next. No complete saga manuscript is preserved from the thirteenth century — only fragments of sagas — but the codices from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are important witnesses to scribes' and patrons' appreciation and assessment of the subject matter of the sagas. The making of a medieval codex can be viewed as being equivalent to a modern edition in that the editor of the manuscript placed the text in a new context and a new setting.

We may detect an instantly recognizable difference in the planning of manuscripts containing the sagas of Icelanders in the fourteenth century, on the one hand, and the fifteenth century on the other; as we have seen, the generic boundaries

³² Kari Ellen Gade, 'The Dating and Attributions of Verses in the Skald Sagas', in *Skaldsagas*, ed. by Poole, pp. 50–74.

between the *fornaldarsögur* and the *Íslendingasögur* appear to have broken down by the fifteenth century. The beginning of the fifteenth century signals a change in the transmission of the sagas, a change which corresponds to the demise of skaldic verse-making and the composition of kings' sagas. The transmission of sagas during the fourteenth century reveals another picture. Three fourteenth-century manuscripts will be briefly mentioned to conclude this essay: *Mqðruvallabók*, *Vatnshyrna*, and *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna* contain, or contained, more than two sagas from that century, and they therefore give us a unique opportunity to read the sagas in a rich textual context.³³

Mqðruvallabók, from the middle of the fourteenth century, is by far the largest manuscript of sagas of Icelanders, containing eleven sagas: *Njáls saga*, *Egils saga*, *Finnboga saga*, *Bandamanna saga*, *Kormáks saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Droplaugarsona saga*, *Ólkofra saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, and *Fóstbræðra saga*. It is problematic to gauge the editor's thematic approach, though it is clear that all parts of the country are represented in the collection. Interest in skaldic verse is not the defining factor, even though it is conspicuous that the manuscript contains four of the traditional skalds' sagas, *Egils saga*, *Hallfreðar saga*, *Kormáks saga*, and *Fóstbræðra saga*. Only one saga, *Finnboga saga*, is without skaldic verse altogether.

The lost *Vatnshyrna* manuscript, probably written by Magnús Þórhallsson (one of the scribes of *Flateyjarbók*) for Jón Hákonarson in Víðidalstunga in the latter part of the fourteenth century,³⁴ seems to have contained a completely different collection of sagas: *Flóamanna saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Hænsa-Þóris saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Kjalnesinga saga*, *Króka-Refs saga*, *Stjörnu-Odda draumr*, *Bergbúa þáttr*, *Kumlbúa þáttr*, and *Þorsteins draumr Síðu-Hallssonar*.³⁵ Only *Laxdæla saga* is common to *Mqðruvallabók* and *Vatnshyrna*. *Pseudo-Vatnshyrna* (AM 564 a 4°, AM 445 b 4°, and AM 445 c I 4° written c. 1400 in seven hands) contained *Bárðar saga*, *Þórðar saga hreðu*, *Bergbúa þáttr*, *Kumlbúa þáttr*, *Draumr Þorsteins Síðu-Hallssonar*, *Gísla saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, and *Harðar*

³³ Many of the fourteenth-century codices are now completely lost to us, but are preserved in later copies. See, for example, Agnete Loth's discussion of the lost fourteenth-century manuscript of *Gísla saga*, *Fóstbræðra saga*, *Þorsteins saga Síðu-Hallssonar*, and *Hrafn saga*: 'Inledning'. *Membrana Regia Deperdita*, Editiones Arnarnagðæanæ, A 5 (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1960), p. lxxxviii. It must, however, be recognized that we do not have any codicological information about this manuscript, and therefore do not know if these four sagas were bound together originally. Torfæus notes only the two first mentioned sagas in his description of the manuscript.

³⁴ Stefán Karlsson, 'Um Vatnshyrnu', *Opuscula*, 4 (1970), 279–303 (pp. 296–97).

³⁵ Stefán Karlsson, 'Um Vatnshyrnu', pp. 279–80.

saga, alongside *Flóamanna saga*, *Eyrbyggja saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, and the *Melabók* manuscript of *Landnáma*.³⁶ An interest in the supernatural, and dreams in particular, is one of the links between the latter codices. None of these manuscripts crosses the generic boundaries of the sagas of Icelanders.

The choice of verse in the sagas did not depend on the time of writing, but was due, as I have suggested, to geographical, thematic, or narratological preferences. The sagas of Icelanders are not preceded by a literary prologue, as some of the *fornaldarsögur* and the kings' sagas are, and thus we do not have first-hand knowledge of the attitudes of the authors to these literary works. The stanzas stand as authorial signatures in the sagas: by choosing the prosimetric form the author may have revealed his cultural background and his aesthetic standpoint. The skaldic art-form was studied extensively in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in most parts of Iceland, both with reference to the indigenous poetic tradition and within the framework of Latin grammatical learning. Skaldic stanzas were part of the sophisticated interpretative tradition that flourished in Iceland in this period, exemplified by the manuscript tradition of *Snorra Edda* and the grammatical treatises. The authors making extensive and elaborate use of skaldic stanzas in the sagas would have been aware of the importance of skaldic poetry in this learned framework, and by introducing poetic ambiguity into the narrative of the sagas, they were opening up a new area of interpretative possibility. The authenticity of the verse was not of paramount importance to these writers; they seem instead to have been exploring the effects of quoting stanzas in their narratives. Some authors may have been using skaldic poetry as a cultural symbol, even for mimetic purposes (such as in those sagas echoing the skalds' sagas); others interlaced skaldic poetry in the narrative with such skill that the verses become fundamental to the artistic and thematic structure of the sagas.

³⁶ McKinnell, 'Pseudo-Vatnsþyrna', pp. 331–34.

MANSQNGR – A PHANTOM GENRE?

Edith Marold

translated by Kate Heslop

Most literary histories render *mansqngr* rather loosely as ‘love poem’, and apply the term not only to the *mansqngr* banned in *Grágás* and mentioned in a few *Íslendingasögur*, but also to the surviving skaldic love poems, even though the latter are never described as *mansqngr*. This tendency is clearest in the only study of the genre, the now-outdated investigation by Möbius.¹ After assembling the examples of *mansqngr*, he adds a whole host of skaldic love poems which, however, are nowhere called *mansqngr*.² A series of questions — which have indeed occasionally been raised before, but seldom satisfactorily answered — arises from this state of affairs.

1. There is no adequate explanation of *mansqngr* as a generic term. At least Heusler gives a reasonably accurate translation of *mansqngsvísur*, as ‘maiden-song strophes’.³ However, the problematic nature of this designation has evidently never been adequately investigated, or else the considerable difference between the

¹ Theodor Möbius, ‘Vom isl. mansöngur’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie: Ergänzungsband* (1874), 42–61.

² See for example Eugen Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur*, 2nd rev. edn (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1904), pp. 659–60, p. 677; Einar Ól. Sveinsson says ‘þ. e. ástakvæði um konu’ (‘i.e. love poems about women’), and his corpus of love poems reflects this conception (Einar Ól. Sveinsson, *Íslenzkar bókmenntir í fornöld* (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1962), p. 88). Finnur Jónsson complains that one cannot arrive at a clear concept of this genre because none of the *mansqngr* referred to are preserved, but in the next breath classes them with the *lausavísur* of the skald sagas and Haraldr’s *gamanvísur* (Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 3 vols, 2nd rev. edn (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), I, 351). See also Andreas Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, 2nd rev. edn (Potsdam: Athenaion, 1941), pp. 103, 130.

³ Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, p. 103.

surviving love poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages and a genre designated as 'maiden-song' would soon have become apparent. To date only Preben Meulengracht Sørensen has drawn attention to the problematic of this generic term:

Ordet fortolkes som en form for kærlighedsdigtning: men dets nøjagtige indhold er ikke klart, og betydningen af forleddet *man-*, der almindeligvis identificeres med substantivet *man* (neutrum), 'trælkvinde', er næppe tilstrækkeligt klarlagt.⁴

(The word is interpreted as meaning a kind of love poetry, but its exact content is not clear, and the significance of the first component *man-*, generally identified with the substantive *man* n. 'slave-woman', has hardly been satisfactorily explained.)

The interpretation of *mansqnggr* meaning 'love poem' in a general sense gives rise to a series of problems:

1.1. If the translation of *mansqnggr* as 'maiden-song' is correct, this designation fits neither the surviving love-verses, as these are almost exclusively spoken by men (leaving aside the special case of Steingerðr), nor the situations in which *mansqnggr*, *mansqngskvæði*, or *mansqngsdrápur* are mentioned,⁵ for the composers of these poems are also exclusively men. On the other hand, the maiden-song (on which more below), as its name suggests, is only attested with a female speaking role.⁶ *Hallfreðar saga* seems to be an exception. When Hallfreðr composes his malicious verses about Gríss and Kolfinna's married life, he asserts that Kolfinna composed them.⁷ However, closer examination of the verses reveals that 'I' appears only once, and refers not to a woman, but rather to Hallfreðr himself.⁸ The other verses

⁴ Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære: Studier i islendingesagaerne* (Århus: Aarhus universitetsforlag, 1993), p. 202.

⁵ The account in *Jóns saga helga* is an exception; see below.

⁶ Theodor Frings, 'Minnesinger und Troubadours', in *Der deutsche Minnesang: Aufsätze zu seiner Erforschung*, ed. by H. Fromm, Wege der Forschung, 5 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972) [corrected and expanded edition of his 'Minnesinger und Troubadours', *Vorträge und Schriften der deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin*, 34 (1949)], pp. 1–57 (p. 12).

⁷ 'En er þau kómu í sæng, Hallfreðr ok Kolfinna, spyrr hann, hversu mart væri um ástir þeira Gríss. Hon kvað vel vera. Hallfreðr segir: "Vera má, at svá sé, en annat þykkir mér finnask á vísum þeim, er þú hefir kveðit til Gríss": *Hallfreðar saga*, in *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 133–200 (p. 181). ('And when Hallfreðr and Kolfinna got into bed, he asks about the nature of the love between her and Gríss. She said things were fine. Hallfreðr says: "That may be so, but I seem to hear something else in the verses which you have composed about Gríss.")

⁸ In a parenthesis in the second *helmingr* of st. 18 (*Hallfreðar saga*, p. 181): 'leyfik ljóssa vífa lund' ('I praise the disposition of the bright lady').

are composed from a neutral, external point of view and the woman is discussed in the third person. Moreover, the verses are not called *mansqngsvísur*, at least not in the *Mǫðruvallabók* (AM 132 fol) redaction which cites them. This designation appears first in a later redaction (see below) but there Hallfreðr is unambiguously presented as their composer.

1.2. A further problem is the term *-sqngr*. The generic term *sqngr* occurs elsewhere only once, namely in the eddic poem *Grottasqngr*. *Sqngr* denotes a sung text, a *cantus*, especially in church usage. As Möbius observes:

[...] in der bedeutung: carmen, gedicht, die es in *mansöngr* hat, scheint es — ausser etwa in *söngr*, *ljóðsöngr* zur widergabe des franz.: *lais* in strengl. 1^{23,27} — sonst nicht vorzukommen, da selbst in: *Grottasöngr* (*þá er sagt at þær kvæði ljóð þau er kallat er Grottasöngr*, SnE 1848–87 I, 376¹⁴) die bedeutung des singens wesentlich scheint (str. 4¹: *sungu*, 17⁷: *söngum*).⁹

([...] the meaning ‘carmen, poem’, which it has in *mansöngr*, appears — except perhaps for *söngr*, *ljóðsöngr* to render Fr. *lais* in *Strengl[eikar]* — not to occur elsewhere, as even in *Grottasöngr* (*þá er sagt at þær kvæði ljóð þau er kallat er Grottasöngr* ‘[it is said that they recited that poem which is called *Grotti’s song*’]) the meaning ‘singing’ seems essential (*sungu* st. 4:1, *söngum* st. 17:7).)

It is generally agreed, however, that skaldic poems were not sung. This fact alone ought to rule out the possibility of strophes in skaldic metres being called *mansqngr*.

2. If *mansqngr* was the common term for ‘lovesong’, why are the surviving love verses never called *mansqngr*? There is only a single exception, namely a *lausavísa* in *Egils saga* (ch. 56, *Ókynni vensk*).¹⁰

3. If the composition of *mansqngr* was punishable by law, one can readily understand why the texts which mention the term *mansqngr* do not preserve any corresponding verses. But in that case why are a large number of love poems attributed to named skalds preserved, apparently without legal hindrance? And why is the interdict on *mansqngr* not a theme of the skald sagas which contain such poetry? Various explanations have been suggested. It has been supposed that this law was not in fact very strictly applied.¹¹ Another suggestion is that love

⁹ Möbius, ‘Vom isl. mansöngr’, p. 42.

¹⁰ *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), p. 148; see further below.

¹¹ For example Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, p. 103: ‘Die Bedrohung der Liebesverse mit Waldgang dürfen wir nach den vielen Sagaberichten zu der blassen Theorie des isländischen Rechtsbuches zählen’ (‘Due to the many saga accounts, we may regard the threat of *skóggangr* for love-verses as merely one of the theories of the Icelandic law-codes’); Jón Helgason, ‘Norges og

verses never mentioned the name of the woman.¹² Bjarni Einarsson considered various possibilities for evading the prohibition: anonymity, invented female names, the use of *ofljóst* expressions for names (see below), or composing in the name of a long-dead skald.¹³

An answer to these questions will now be sought by means of an analysis of the references to *mansqng*, *mansqngskvæði*, *-vísa*, and *-drápa*. The instances of *mansqng* may be divided into two groups: those in which the word denotes a love poem without further qualification; and those in which it denotes forbidden and offensive poetry.

Mansqng as a Forbidden Genre

Sagas

The story of Ingólfr's fateful love for Valgerðr, about whom he composes *mansqngsvísur* after he is forbidden to visit her, thereby provoking a lawsuit, appears in three texts.

In *Hallfredar saga* Ingólfr and Valgerðr's love-affair is a short episode at the beginning of the saga (chs 2–3), which merely indicates the reason why Óttarr, Hallfredr's father, moves to Norðrárdalr. When Óttarr arrives as a settler in Vatnsdalr, Þorsteinn Ingimundarson is the *hofðingi* there. His son Ingólfr is introduced as a universally popular young man,¹⁴ who falls in love with Óttarr's daughter Valgerðr at an autumn feast and from then on continually visits her but refuses to enter into marriage. Óttarr succeeds in persuading Ingólfr's father to ban these visits. Ingólfr obeys his father but 'avenges' himself by even more drastic behaviour: he composes a *mansqngsdrápa* about Valgerðr. Óttarr responds to this

Islands digtning', in *Litteratur-Historie B. Norge og Island*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Nordisk kultur, 8B (Stockholm: Bonnier; Oslo: Aschehoug; Copenhagen: Schultz, 1953), pp. 3–179 (p. 147): 'Intet tyder dog på, at virkeligheden har været så streng som lovens bogstav' ('But nothing suggests that the reality was as stringent as the letter of the law'); Bjarni Einarsson, *To skjalde-sagaer: en analyse af Kormáks saga og Hallfredar saga* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1976), p. 21: 'Der findes ingen vidnesbyrd om at paragraffen nogen sinde er blevet bragt i anvendelse' ('There is no evidence that this provision was ever put to use').

¹² Mogk, *Geschichte der norwegisch-isländischen Literatur*, pp. 659–60.

¹³ Bjarni Einarsson, *To skjaldesagaer*, p. 21.

¹⁴ This is indicated by the first verse of the saga which describes how all the girls long for Ingólfr: 'Allir vildu meyjar' (*Hallfredar saga*, p. 142).

escalation by bringing a lawsuit at the Húnavatnsþing,¹⁵ but with only partial success. He does receive money in compensation for the insult to him, but at the same time he is compelled to leave Vatnsdalr.

The depiction of the episode in *Vatnsdæla saga* (chs 37–39) differs only slightly. The autumn feast is instead an autumn þing, and the continued visits are specified as *fifla* ('beguiling') and *svívirða* ('shaming'). Ingólfr again obeys his father, 'en orti mansqngsvísur nökkurar um Valgerði ok kvað síðan' ('but composed some *mansqngsvísur* about Valgerðr and then recited them'): he not only composes verses, but performs them as well. Here the accusation is defeated by Þorsteinn forcibly breaking up the court, so no verdict can be reached.¹⁶ And here too the result is that Óttarr leaves the district shortly afterwards.

The *mansqngsvísur* in *Vatnsdæla saga*, as in *Hallfredar saga*, constitute an escalation of a pre-existing conflict. In *Vatnsdæla saga* the conflict is carried further than in *Hallfredar saga*, as Ingólfr continues his visits after Óttarr has moved away. After an unsuccessful attack carried out by an outlaw, a settlement is made: Ingólfr will become *óheilagr* ('outlawed') if he keeps visiting Valgerðr. The visits continue, and Ingólfr's brother falls victim to renewed hostilities. The conflict goes no further, as Ingólfr dies from wounds sustained in a fight with robbers. The Ingólfr story also finds its way into *Landnámabók*, although only in the *Þórðarbók* (AM 106 fol) redaction.¹⁷ All editors of *Vatnsdæla* agree that we are dealing with

¹⁵ 'Ingólfr kvað við hans umtal batna skyldu ok lét þá af kvámum fyrst í stað. Síðan orti Ingólfr mansqngsdrápu um Valgerði. Óttarr reiddisk því mjök; ferr enn at hitta Þorstein ok kvað sér nú leitast mikillar skapraunar: "Nú bið ek, at þú lofir mér at stefna syni þínum": *Hallfredar saga*, p. 143. ('Ingólfr said he would improve his behaviour after this conversation and at first he leaves off his visits. Then Ingólfr composed a *mansqngsdrápa* about Valgerðr. Óttarr is very angry at that; he goes to see Þorsteinn and says a great offence is being committed against him: "Now I ask you to give me leave to summons your son."')

¹⁶ 'Ok er í dóm kom málit, gengu þeir Ingólfr ok Jökull at dóminum ok hleypði upp með hoggum, ok fell niðr málit': *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, pp. 1–131 (p. 100). ('And when the case came to judgement, Ingólfr and Jökull went to the court and broke it up by force, and the case lapsed.')

¹⁷ Material from *Vatnsdæla saga* appears in two places in *Landnámabók*: the first part (A) runs from the beginning of the saga to the avenging of Ingimundr by his sons, and is present in all redactions of *Landnámabók*. The part about Ingólfr and Valgerðr (B) is, however, only in *Þórðarbók*, a much younger redaction: 'Ingolfur ortti um Valgerði Ottarsd(ottur) mansqngsdrapu. þa sette Ottar Ingolf og onýttisk það. þa andadist Þorir enn Ottar riedst á braut': *Landnámabók. Melabók AM 106. 112 fol.*, ed. by Kommissionen for det Arnsmagnæanske Legat (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1921), p. 96. ('Ingólfr composed a *mansqngsdrápa* about Valgerðr Óttarsdóttir; then Óttarr prosecuted Ingólfr without success; then Þorir died but Óttarr moved away.')

an excerpt from *Vatnsdæla saga* here.¹⁸ Whether the Ingólfr story was taken over from one saga into the others or whether the versions are independent is difficult to clarify. The saga texts as they stand are probably the result of complex processes of mutual influence.¹⁹

Whatever the mutual relationship of the extant saga texts, it may be assumed that the origin of the narrative material — a legal dispute over a dishonourable love relationship which harms the family's reputation — belongs more in the tradition of the *Vatnsdælir* than of Hallfreðr's family.²⁰ The varying significance of the episode in the narrative structure of the two sagas also supports this supposition. While in *Hallfreðar saga* it only motivates Óttarr's move from *Vatnsdalr*, in *Vatnsdæla saga* the conflict between Ingólfr and Óttarr carries more weight and makes up a large part of the section on the Ingimundarsons.²¹

¹⁸ *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, p. xxxiii: 'Um B eru allir á einu máli, a það sé ekkert annað en útdráttur úr Vatnsdælu, og það þeirri, sem vér nú höfum, en að visu eftir handriti, sem nú er glatað, en verið hefur nokkuð frábrugðið þeim, sem nú eru til' ('All agree that B is nothing other than an extract from *Vatnsdæla*, and from the same version of the saga that we now have, although drawn from a now-lost manuscript which was somewhat different from those which now exist'); cf. *Vatnsdælasaga*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 58 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1934), p. xxi; *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by W. H. Vogt, Altnordische Saga-Bibliothek, 16 (Halle: Niemeyer, 1921), § 5.

¹⁹ So it seems for example to Jan de Vries (*Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, 2nd rev. edn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1967), II, 400): 'An einigen Stellen behandelt die Saga Ereignisse, die auch in der Hallfrøðar saga vorkommen. Wahrscheinlich gehen diese Saga und die ältere Fassung der Vatnsdæla auf eine geschriebene Quelle zurück, aber die uns bekannte Vatnsdæla hat allem Anscheine nach wieder aus der Hallfrøðar saga geschöpft.' ('At some points the saga deals with events which are also in *Hallfreðar saga*. Probably this saga and the older redaction of *Vatnsdæla* both go back to a written source, but the version of *Vatnsdæla* known to us has to all appearances taken material from *Hallfreðar saga*.')

²⁰ Compare Vogt (*Vatnsdæla saga*, p. xxix): 'sie ist eine Vatnsdæla-, nicht eine Hallfreðar-geschichte, obgleich sie in ursprünglicherer Gestalt in Hallfr. s. steht' ('this is a Vatnsdæla-, not a Hallfreðr-story, even though it appears in a more original form in *Hallfreðar saga*').

²¹ The argument that the priority of *Hallfreðar saga* is proven by the Ingólfr episode's role as a kind of prelude to the Kolfinna story (de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 395–96.) does not stand up to closer scrutiny. The *Gríssvísur* are first called *mansqngur* in the redaction of *Hallfreðar saga* contained in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* (see below), and the relationships between the characters are quite different. Bjarni Einarsson's assumption (*Skáldasögur: Um uppruna og eðli ástaskáldasagnanna fornu* (Reykjavík: Bókaútgáfa Menningarsjóðs, 1961), p. 179) that this episode is modelled on that of Kanelangres and Blancheffur, whose union gives rise to Tristan, has, however, met with scepticism.

We find a very similar structure in the brief mention of the *mansqngskvæði* of Qlvir hnúfa in *Egils saga*:

Þat var á einu hausti, at fjölmennt var á Gaulum at haustblóti; þá sá Qlvir hnúfa Sólveigu ok gerði sér um títt; síðan bað hann hennar, en jarlinum þótti manna munr ok vildi eigi gipta hana. Síðan orti Qlvir mǫrg mansqngskvæði um hana; svá mikit gerði Qlvir sér um Sólveigu, at hann lét af herfǫrum [...].²²

(It happened one autumn that there was a great gathering at Gaular for the autumn feast; Qlvir hnúfa saw Sólveig then and soon became keen on her; later he asked for her hand, but the jarl thought him unworthy and would not give her away. Then Qlvir composed many *mansqngskvæði* about her; he was so besotted with her that he stopped going on raiding trips [...].)

Once again the *mansqngskvæði* follow the dismissal of the suitor, at least chronologically (although perhaps we may read this chronological link as a causal one). In contrast to *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Hallfredar saga*, any reaction to the *mansqngskvæði* is apparently absent. But reading on in the saga, we see that an attack by Atli jarl's sons on Qlvir is reported, rather abruptly, after the battle of Sólskel. The outcome is that Qlvir flees into the protection of Haraldr hárfagri, whose skald he becomes. Perhaps the *mansqngskvæði* are the reason for the brothers' assault, as Sólveig is their sister.²³ We end up once again, then, with the same narrative structure:

1. A man falls in love with a beautiful woman at a social gathering (*haustblót*, *haustþing*, *haustboð*) and courts her or meets with her.
2. He is sent away by the father.
3. He composes *mansqngsvísur* in reaction to this.
4. This leads to an accusation at the *þing* or an attack by family members.

A *mansqngr* also appears as an element in one of the many *hofudlausn* stories, in an unhistorical skald-anecdote about Óttarr *svarti*. One of the surviving fragments of Styrmir Kárasón's *Óláfs saga helga* tells how Óttarr, at that time in the *hird* of Óláfr *sænski*, made a *mansqngsdrápa* about the King's daughter Ástriðr. Óláfr *helgi* has Óttarr arrested in Norway because of this and intends to execute him. The skald Sighvatr visits Óttarr in order to help him, first by improving the poem and then by urging Óttarr to make a new poem about the King. The conversation between the two indicates how the author conceived of a *mansqngsdrápa*. He says of the poem 'þat kvæði var miok ort ok hellt við væningar' ('that poem

²² *Egils saga*, p. 6.

²³ Meulengracht Sørensen also suggests this: *Fortælling og ære*, p. 133.

used strong words, full of boasting [of a love-affair]'), and Sighvatr evaluates it similarly: 'mjok er kuædit ort ok eigi er vndarligt þott konunginum misliki kuædit' ('the poem is strongly worded and it is no wonder the king might have disliked the poem'). Sighvatr's suggested revision is to remove the offensive words: 'nu skulum vit snua þeim visum sem mest eru akuedin ord í kuædinu' ('now we should change those verses of the poem which contain the most incriminating words').²⁴ With that, and the poem on Óláfr *helgi*, the skald is able to save his neck.

This anecdote also appears, somewhat more concisely, in the *Legendary saga of St Óláfr*,²⁵ where it serves this text's agenda of representing the King's sanctity and exemplary nature.²⁶ Here again Sighvatr is the mediator, first advising on the improvement of the poem by changing or leaving out verses, and finally speaking for Óttarr before the King. This story cannot be called a historical witness. Rather, it is one of a large group of skald anecdotes in which a skald arouses the king's anger for some reason or other and manages to save his neck with a poem.²⁷ But the complex of ideas associated with *mansqng* becomes clear in this episode: a *mansqng* is a poem containing offensive words.

In *Qlkofra þátr* a *mansqngsdrápa* is the means of unmasking one of the acquisitive *goðar*, Skapti *lögsgumaðr*. The *goðar* wish to deprive a rich but undistinguished man of his money by prosecuting him for arson. The defendant's accomplice supports him by accusing all the *goðar* of dishonourable behaviour. In the case of Skapti he says:

Þurfa muntu þess, Skapti, at taka meira á ǫðrum sakferlum, ef skríða skal í þat skarð, er Ormr, frændi þinn, reytti af þér fyrir mansqngsdrápu, er þú ortir um konu hans. Var þat illa gort, enda var þat illa goltit.²⁸

(You, Skapti, will need to receive more from other lawsuits if you are to make good the strip that your kinsman Ormr tore off you for the *mansqngsdrápa* you composed about his wife. That was ill done, and repaid with malice.)

²⁴ *Den store saga om Olav den hellige efter pergamenthåndskrift i Kgl. biblioteket i Stockholm Nr. 2 4to med varianter fra andre Håndskrifter*, ed. by Oscar Albert Johnsen and Jón Helgason, 2 vols (Oslo: Kjeldeskriftfondet, 1941), II, 688.

²⁵ *Ólafs saga hins helga: Die 'Legendarische Saga' über Olaf d. Heiligen (Hs. Delagard. saml. nr. 8II)*, ed. and trans. by Anne Heinrichs and others (Heidelberg: Winter, 1982), p. 132.

²⁶ On this point, see *Ólafs saga hins helga*, ed. and trans. by Heinrichs and others, pp. 14–15.

²⁷ See Odd Nordland, *Höfuðlausn i Egils saga: Ein tradisjonskritisk studie* (Oslo: Norske Samlaget, 1956).

²⁸ *Qlkofra þátr*, in *Austfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Jón Jóhannesson, Íslenzk fornrit, 11 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1950), pp. 83–94 (p. 91).

Even if *Ölkofra þáttur* can lay no claim to historical accuracy,²⁹ here once again *mansqngr* appears as an illegal act, for which in this case damages must be paid. The author of the saga (composed c. 1250) was an educated man who obviously also knew something about the law. He probably knew the prohibition against *mansqngr* passed down in *Grágás* (see below) and used it to furnish one of the ways of unmasking the *goðar*.

A late example of *mansqngsvísur* is to be found in the redaction of *Hallfreðar saga* preserved as a series of discontinuous segments within *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*. The Ingólfr story also occurs here, in a version which differs only in minor variations in wording from that preserved in the *Mqðruvallabók* redaction. The term *mansqngr* appears a second time in the *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* redaction, namely in connection with Hallfreðr and Kolfinna's meeting at a hut, where they spend the night together. This episode is also found in the *Mqðruvallabók* redaction but in a different form. There, three rather obscene verses about Kolfinna and Gríss's marital relations are cited, but the verses are not identified as *mansqngr*. In the version of *Hallfreðar saga* in *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta* the verses are not cited; they were too offensive for the redactor. Instead the text reads:

en er Hallfreðr stóð upp um morgininn, kvað hann nökkurar vísur, þær er eigi er þörf á at rita, bæði með mansaung til Kolfinnu ok úsæmdar orðum við Grís.³⁰

(and when Hallfreðr got up in the morning, he spoke some verses which there is no profit in writing down, containing both *mansqngr* to Kolfinna and disgraceful words about Gríss.)

We may conclude that the author of this version of *Hallfreðar saga* regarded Hallfreðr's verses as *mansqngr*. To stress the point once again: a *mansqngr* is not simply a love poem, but rather a poem of obscene character.

The *mansqngr* in *Fóstbræðra saga* is harder to interpret. In ch. 11 of the saga Þormóðr comes by chance to a farm where a widow and her daughter, Þorbjörg *kolbrún*, live. Þormóðr and Þorbjörg fall in love immediately.

²⁹ According to Jón Jóhannesson, 'Ölkofra þáttur ber þess ótvíræð merki, að hann er skáldsaga': *Austfirðinga sögur*, p. xxxiv. ('*Ölkofra þáttur* bears the unmistakable marks of being a fictional work.')

³⁰ *Fornmanna sögur eptir gömlum handritum útgefnar að tilhlutun hins norræna fornfræða félags*, 12 vols (Copenhagen: Popp, 1825–37), II, 248.

Nú venr Þormóðr kvámur sínar til húss Katlu, ok sprettr upp af honum einstaka mansöngsvísur, ok líkar konum þat vel, þeim er þar váru.³¹

(Now Þormóðr gets in the habit of visiting Katla's house, and comes out now and then with *mansöngsvísur*, and the women there like that very much.)

In contrast to the Ingólfr story, Þormóðr's visits are not only tolerated but even encouraged, and he is invited to abandon his travelling companions and stay at the farm. Katla, the widow, says very directly: 'Nú er þat heimilt, at þú sér hér, ef þú vill þat, því at oss er mikit gaman at þér' ('Now you are free to stay here, if you want to, because you give us a good deal of pleasure'), and Þormóðr accepts, 'því at mér þykkir hér skemmtilig at vera hjá yðr' ('because I find it enjoyable to be here with you'). It seems that both parties intend to enjoy one another's company. During his stay Þormóðr also gets his name 'Kolbrúnarskald' for a praise poem which he composes about Þorbjörg. Later, after he has left Þorbjörg, he dedicates these verses to his former sweetheart Þórdís Grímudóttir í Qgur. At this Þorbjörg appears to him in a dream and proclaims that he will suffer pains in his eyes until he publicly bestows the poem on her.

So are the *Kolbrúnarvísur* identical to the *mansöngsvísur* which the saga mentions shortly before? Möbius equates the two,³² but in my opinion this is not satisfactory. The *Kolbrúnarvísur* and the *mansöngsvísur* emerge from different situations: the *mansöngsvísur* are part of the situation of *at skemmta sér* with the women at Katla's house, behaviour whose erotic character is clearly signalled in the text. The widow's and her daughter's eagerness to oblige and the constant repetition of the words *skemmta*, *skemmtiligr*, and *gaman* could be interpreted as indicating a not entirely respectable relationship, one which is then additionally characterized by the use of the word *mansöngsvísur* (to be interpreted in accordance with the situation as erotic, suggestive, or even obscene poetry). The mention of *mansöng* is used by the saga author to convey the erotic, permissive atmosphere at the widow Katla's house. The *Kolbrúnarvísur*, on the other hand, are introduced as a *lofkvæði* which Þormóðr performs on several occasions.³³ This

³¹ *Fóstbræðra saga*, in *Vestfirðinga sǫgur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórolfsson and Guðni Jónsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 6 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1943), pp. 121–276 (p. 170).

³² Möbius, 'Vom isl. mansöng', p. 49.

³³ 'Þormóðr var í Arnardal hálfan mánuð. Hann yrkir þá lofkvæði um Þorbjörg kolbrún; þat kallaði hann Kolbrúnarvísur. Ok er kvæðit var ort, þá færði hann kvæðit, svá at margir menn heyrðu': *Fóstbræðra saga*, p. 171. ('Þormóðr was in Arnardalr for half a month. There he composes a praise-poem about Þorbjörg kolbrún, which he called *Kolbrúnarvísur*. And when the poem was finished, he performed it so that many people heard it.')

escapade of Þormóðr's seems to have been quite well-known, as all three older versions of *Landnámabók* refer to it; not for the *mansqngsvísur*, but rather because of the praise poem for Þorbjörg.³⁴ Perhaps these verses became so famous because of the story of their forced rededication.

To summarize: in the saga accounts, *mansqngr* appears in various narrative types and performs various narrative functions, as follows:

- as the revenge of a thwarted suitor (Ingólfr, Qlvir)
- as part of a head-ransom episode (Óttarr *svarti*)
- as part of the unmasking of a *goði*
- as a representative element in an erotically coloured *skemmtan* situation (*Fóstbræðra saga*)
- as a later interpretation of obscene strophes (*Hallfredar saga* in the *ÓT* redaction)

From these narratives the *mansqngr* can be defined as a more or less erotic or obscene poem, performed by a man, and perhaps widely circulated.

The well-known treatment of *mansqngr* in *Grágás* corresponds closely to the poem-type we have reconstructed out of the saga sources:

Ef maðr yrkir mansöng vm cono oc varðar scog gang. Kona a söc ef hon er xx. eða ellre. ef hon vill eigi sökia láta. oc a lavg raðande hennar sökena.³⁵

(If a man composes *mansqngr* about a woman he suffers full outlawry. The woman has to bring the case if she is twenty or older. If she will not have it prosecuted, then her legal administrator has to bring the case.)

This passage appears in the younger additions to *Konungsbók* (GKS 1157 fol) and *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 334 fol), where it is inserted into a passage bearing the title

³⁴ *Landnámabók*, ed. by Jakob Benediktsson, Íslenzk fornrit, 1 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1968), pp. 170–71: *Melabók* (AM 445 b 4^o) version, ch. 40: 'stjúpdóttir Eyjúlfs var Þorbjörg Glúmsdóttir, er kǫlluð var Kolbrún. er Þormóðr orti um Kolbrúnarskáld' ('Eyjúlfr's step-daughter was Þorbjörg Glúmsdóttir, known as Kolbrún, whom Þormóðr *Kolbrúnarskáld* composed about'); *Sturlubók* (AM 107 fol) version, ch. 127: 'Glúmr átti fyrr Kǫtlu, ok var þeira dóttir Þorbjörg kolbrún, er Þormóðr orti um' ('before that Glúmr was married to Katla, and their daughter was Þorbjörg kolbrún, whom Þormóðr composed about'); *Hauksbók* (AM 371 4^o) version, ch. 99: '[...] ok Eyjólfr, er var stjúpfaðir Þorbjargar kolbrúnar Glúmsdóttur, er Þormóðr orti um' ('[...] and Eyjólfr, who was the stepfather of Þorbjörg kolbrún Glúmsdóttir, whom Þormóðr composed about').

³⁵ *Konungsbók* (GKS 1157 fol), § 238 (*Grágas: Íslændernes lovbog i fristatens tid, udg. efter det kongelige Bibliotheks Haandskrift*, ed. and trans. by Vilhjálmur Finsen, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Berling, 1852), II, 184); *Staðarhólsbók* (AM 334 fol), § 377 (*Grágás efter det Arnemagneanske Haandskrift Nr. 334 fol.*, ed. and trans. by Vilhjálmur Finsen (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1879), p. 393).

‘vm scaldscap’ (‘on poetry’), an exhaustive treatment of the different kinds of harmful poetry and the various punishments for them. The sentence about *mansqng* occurs in the midst of these regulations. In terms of the penalty laid down, *mansqng* corresponds to a poem which contains blame or mockery, and is therefore practically equated with *níð*.³⁶

Religious Texts

In his efforts to represent the sainted Bishop as a model of sanctity and practical theology, the author of *Jóns saga helga* has him take steps against *mansqng*. The relevant passage exists in three versions:³⁷

S: Leikr sá var mǫnnum tíðr, er ófagrligr er, at kveðask skyldu at: karlmaðr at konu, en kona at karlmanni, klækiligar vísur ok hæðiligar ok óáheyriligar. En þat lét hann af takast ok bannaði með ǫllu at gera. Mansǫngs kvæði	H: Leikr sá var mǫnnum tíðr, í þann tíma, er heldr er ófagr, at bera ‘bottafilldi’. Þar skyldi karlmaðr kveða at konu, ok svá kona at karlmanni, klækiligar vísur ok ótilheyriligar með mansǫngs sneiðingi ok saur-yrði. Þá forneskju lét hann af takask ok bannaði með	L: Leikr sá var kær mǫnnum, áðr en hinn heilagi Jón varð biskup, at kveða skyldi karlmaðr til konu í dans blautlig kvæði ok regilig, ok kona til karlmanns mansǫngsvísur; þenna leik lét hann af taka ok bannaði
--	---	--

³⁶ See Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortelling og ære*, p. 202: ‘Den vigtigste grund til forbudet mod elksovsdigtning har været, at digtning om en kvinde blev betragtet som en krænkelse, fordi den satte kvinden i forbindelse med digteren på en måde, der bragte skam over hende og hendes familie. Kærlighedsdigtningens virkning er symbolsk ligesom niddigtningens. I begge tilfælde er det fornærmelsens form og fiksering i poetisk sprog, der gør den særlig farlig.’ (‘The most important reason for the forbidding of love poetry was that poetry about a woman was viewed as an injury, as it placed the woman in a relation with the poet in a way that brought shame on her and her family. The effect of love poetry is like that of *níð* poetry. In both cases it is the insult’s form and its fixing in poetic language which makes it especially dangerous.’) Anne Holtsmark considers whether the bishops, who had a seat on the *löggrétta*, might have had the ban taken up there (‘Kjærlighetsdigtning’, in *Kulturbistorisk leksikon for nordisk middelalder fra vikingetid til reformationstid*, ed. by J. Danstrup and others, 22 vols (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde & Bagger, 1956–78), VIII, cols 438–43 (col. 439)). That would inter alia explain why these provisions have no parallels in the other Nordic law-codes.

³⁷ *Jóns saga helga* exists in three redactions (only the oldest manuscript of each redaction is given here): S (AM 221 fol.); L (Holm perg 5 fol), an early fourteenth-century revision of S; and H (Holm papp 4), a fourteenth-century compilation of S and L. The text of S and H is given from *Biskupa sögur* I, ed. by Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, Ólafur Halldórsson, and Peter Foote, 2 vols, Íslenzk fornrit, 15 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 2003), II, 211, that of L from *Biskupa sögur gefnar út af hinu íslenzka bókmentafélagi*, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Møller, 1858–78), I, 237.

eða vísur vildi hann eigi heyra kveðin ok eigi láta kveða, þó fekk <hann> því eigi með öllu af komit.	öllu at gera. Mansqngs kvæði eða vísur vildi hann eigi heyra kveðin ok eigi láta kveða, þó fekk hann því eigi með öllu komit.	styrkliga. Mansöngskvæði vildi hann eigi heyra, né kveða láta, en þó fekk hann því eigi af komit með öllu.
(An ugly game of exchanging verses was current among people: a man addressed shameful verses, ignominious and intolerable, to a woman, and the woman to the man. But he [Jón] caused that practice to cease and completely banned it. He wanted neither to hear <i>mansqngskvæði</i> or <i>mansqngsvísur</i> recited, nor to allow them to be recited, though he did not get them abolished altogether.)	(A game was current among people at that time, rather an ugly one, of carrying the ' <i>bottafilldi</i> '. This entailed a man addressing poetry to a woman, and the woman to the man, shameful verses and intolerable, with all the suggestiveness and filthy words of <i>mansqngr</i> . He [Jón] caused that heathen practice to cease and completely banned it. He wanted neither to hear <i>mansqngskvæði</i> or <i>mansqngsvísur</i> recited, nor to allow them to be recited, though he did not get them abolished altogether.)	(That game was dear to people, before Saint Jón became bishop, of a man addressing unmanly, lewd poems to a woman at the dance, and the woman reciting <i>mansqngsvísur</i> to the man; he caused this game to cease and strictly banned it. He did not want to hear <i>mansqngskvæði</i> , nor allow them to be recited, though he did not get them abolished altogether.)

The quotations contain substantial information about both the performance practices associated with *mansqngr* and the nature of their content. Men and women sing *mansqngr* to one another,³⁸ in one version even in a dance.³⁹ As far as content is concerned, the verses are described with terms such as *klekiligr* ('shameful'), *hæðiligr* ('ignominious'), *óáheyrlig* ('intolerable', lit. 'unhearable'), *með sneiðing* ('with suggestiveness'), *með sámýrði/sauryrði* ('with filthy words'), *blautligr* ('effeminate/unmanly'), and *regiligr* ('lewd'). *Mansqngr* as it is described here is a song in dialogue form (for dancing), with obscene content, performed between men and women.

We also encounter *mansqngr* in *Jóns saga baptista*, in the narrative of Salomé's dance which leads to the death of John the Baptist. The narrator introduces mother and daughter as witches, seduced by the Devil:

³⁸ In the S version one could question whether the songs the men and women sing to one another are actually said to be *mansqngr*, but in the other two versions this is clearly stated.

³⁹ Perhaps the reference to *dans* in the L version is due to the fact that the Church was combating recently introduced French dances. It is said of St Þorlákr Þorhallsson that he thought highly of sagas and poetry, instrumental music and singing, but not of dancing. See Sigfús Blöndal, 'Dans i Island', in *Dans*, ed. by H. Grüner Nielsen, Nordisk kultur, 24B (Stockholm: Bonnier; Oslo: Aschehoug; Copenhagen: Schultz, 1933), pp. 163–80 (p. 166).

Syniz líkligt, at þær meðgur hafi þesskyns konur verit, er sialfr ovin allz mannkyns synir þær [C,D; þeim A] sva sem foringia þeira illvirkia. Sumir segia, at hon hafi kveðit með listuligum notum mansaungscantica oc þeytt þar eptir með mikilli kunnastu margboraðar pipur.⁴⁰

(It seems likely that both mother and daughter were the kind of women who [A: to whom] the enemy of all mankind himself shows as the originator of their misdeeds. Some say that she performed the artful melodies of *mansaungscantica* and accompanied herself with extremely skilful playing on flutes with many finger-holes.)

Here too the erotic character so inimical to the Church is ascribed to *mansqngr*. Salomé, herself seduced by the Devil, leads Herod astray with her flute-playing and her song, 'with the artful melodies of love-songs [*mansaungscantica*]'.⁴¹

On another occasion in the same saga when *mansqngr* is referred to, it is again associated with sinful deeds. Believers are exhorted to shun everything evil:

se engi ofdrykkia ne urein lostasemi; se i brottu blöðthelling, kukl ok klækiligir leikar, mansöngur allr, sa er kveikir lostasemi oc munuðlifi.⁴¹

(there should be no excessive drinking nor impure sensuality; shun bloodshed, sorcery, and shameful games, all *mansqngr*, which incites to sensuality and love-play.)

Here *mansqngr* is quite clearly erotic song, which tempts people to *lostasemi* ('sensuality') and *munuðlifi* ('love-play').

In a sermon in the Icelandic *Hómiliubók* on the modes of Church music there is a further example, which stands out clearly from the other occurrences of *mansqngr* in religious texts:

Quintus heiter mansaungs raúst þuiat þeim david oc salomon veitte guþ mesta skilning of astriki brúpar oc brúpguma. þat es heilagrar cristne oc guþs.⁴²

(The fifth [*quintus*] is called *mansqngr*'s mode, because God granted to David and Solomon the most perfect understanding of the great love of the bride and bridegroom, that is of holy Christendom and God.)

The citation comes from the first leaf of the manuscript and is obviously part of an interpretation of the musical modes used in the medieval Church. The fifth mode is described as the mode of love-songs, corresponding to the usual medieval characterization. Róbert Ottósson finds parallels in medieval music theory and

⁴⁰ *Jóns saga baptista II*, in *Postola sögur*, ed. by C. R. Unger (Christiania: Bentzen, 1874), pp. 849–931 (p. 914).

⁴¹ *Jóns saga baptista II*, p. 917.

⁴² *Homiliu-Bók: Isländska Homilier efter en Handskrift från tolfte Århundradet*, ed. by Theodor Wisén (Lund: Gleerup, 1872), p. 1.

sees mnemonic texts used for the learning of melodies by heart as a possible source for the comparisons with biblical figures.⁴³ In the example he discusses the fifth mode is in fact also associated with David; however, the context is quite different.⁴⁴ The only direct parallel for the *Hómiliubók* example is the characterization of the fifth mode as ‘modestus et delectabilis, tristes et anxios lætificans et dulcorans’ (‘prudent and pleasing, encouraging and filling with sweetness those who are mournful and fearful’). The associative proximity of the love between Christendom and God, which was analogized to the love between bride and bridegroom, rules out any negative or erotic significance for *mansqngr* here.

The religious texts paint a picture of the *mansqngr* which corresponds in content, yet is formally quite distinct from, that of the secular texts. Sung performance is more clearly emphasized, and sometimes the link with dance as well. This substantially differentiates the *mansqngr* of the religious sources from that of the narrative and juridical ones, from which it appears rather as an equivalent of *níð*. Common to both source-types is the obscene character of the *mansqngr* and the ban on its performance.

Mansqngr as a Neutral Designation

There are, however, also instances in which the word *mansqngr* is not used as a negative evaluation but in the general sense of ‘love poetry’. An example is *Gylfaginning*’s statement that Freyja values *mansqngr* and may be called upon in matters to do with love.⁴⁵ The single instance of a skaldic verse being called *mansqngr* is also a member of this group. In *Egils saga* the only verses of Egill’s which one could call love verses, the strophes on Ásgerðr, are termed *mansqngr* by Egill’s friend Arinbjörn. In the first verse the skald complains that Ásgerðr does not take any notice of him:⁴⁶ when he was young, he dared to raise his eyes, but now he must

⁴³ Róbert A. Ottósson, ‘Das musiktheoretische Textfragment im Stockholmer Homilienbuch’, *Opuscula*, 4 (1970) (= Bibliotheca Arnarnagæana, 30), 169–76.

⁴⁴ ‘V. Aetate quinta praevaluit David | in funda et lapide contra Goliath’ (‘During the fifth age David was stronger than Goliath by sling and stone’); from a Leipzig missal of the thirteenth century (Róbert A. Ottósson, ‘Das musiktheoretische Textfragment’, p. 174).

⁴⁵ ‘Henni líkaði vel mansqngr. Á hana er gott at heita til ásta’: Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Prologue and Gylfaginning*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (London: Viking Society, 1988), p. 25. (‘*Mansqngr* pleases her greatly. It is good to call on her in matters to do with love.’)

⁴⁶ The words *ókynni vensk* have been variously interpreted: ‘vænner sig til ukendskab (holder sig borte fra mig)’, *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, A1–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), B1–II

bury his nose in his cloak (that is, conceal something)⁴⁷ when he thinks of her. The woman's name is appropriately enough concealed in an *ofljóst* construction, and Arinbjörn, Egill's friend, asks 'hver kona sú væri, er hann orti mansöng um: "hefir þú fólgt nafn hennar í vísu þessi?"' ('who that woman might be, whom he had composed a *mansöng* about: "have you hidden her name in this verse?").⁴⁸

Egill's strophe in response to this question is usually interpreted as saying that he has concealed the woman's name because men will hear and construe the verse. The concealment of the name has thus been connected with the ban on *mansöng*,⁴⁹ and this appears plausible at first glance, as Egill himself seems to give this as a reason. However, it would surely be safer for him to use a standard woman-kenning than an *ofljóst* one, as *ofljóst* challenges the listener to make the effort to decipher it. Closer attention should be paid to what Egill's verse actually says: 'I seldom conceal the name of a WOMAN⁵⁰ in a POEM, [...] because MEN grasp at the POEM with fingers of poetry (i.e. using their ability to understand poems)'.

(Rettet tekst), ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15), B1, 45 ('gets used to being distant (holds herself aloof from me)'); 'Konan á við óhæfiglegt fálæti að búa (at minni hálfu)', *Egils saga*, p. 149 ('The woman has to put up with inappropriate coolness (on my part)'). *Lexicon poeticum* has the following glosses for *ókynni*: '1. mangel på høvisk opførsel, tølperagtig adfærd, unoder. . . . 2. Mangel på bekendtskab', Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931), p. 445 ('1. lack of polite conduct, boorish behaviour, bad habits . . . 2. Lack of acquaintance'). While Sigurður Nordal (*Egils saga*, p. 45) interprets *ókynni* as impolite reticence, Finnur Jónsson takes the phrase to mean the woman is keeping her distance. The decision, to my mind, rests on the meaning of *vensk*. A check of the instances of *venjask* (*Lexicon poeticum*, p. 604) shows that this word is used in the sense of 'develop a certain characteristic', e.g. *venja sik gjöfli/syndum/prek* etc. The *helmingr* cannot mean 'the woman develops impolite conduct'. One should therefore assume (*ó*)*kynni* has a different meaning here, e.g. *kynni* 3. 'Besøg som nogen aflægger hos Slægt og Venner', Johan Fritzner, *Ordbog over det gamle norske Sprog*, 3 vols (Kristiania: Den norske forlagsforening, 1886–96), II, 381 ('visit one pays to family or friends'). This suggests the interpretation of Finnur Jónsson as 'keep one's distance' is to be preferred.

⁴⁷ The idiom 'bury one's nose in one's cloak' means more or less 'have secrets'. It also appears in Sighvatr's warning to Magnús *góði* in *Bersöglisvísur*, st. 12/5–8 (*Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, B1, 237): 'þat's heldr greipt, es þingmenn hnepta höfðum ok stinga nqsum niðr í felda' ('it is rather dangerous when *þing*-men bow their heads and bury their noses down in their cloaks').

⁴⁸ *Egils saga*, p. 149.

⁴⁹ Bjarni Einarsson, *Skáldasögur*, p. 22; Kari Ellen Gade, 'Penile Puns: Personal Names and Phallic Symbols in Skaldic Poetry', in *Essays in Medieval Studies: Proceedings of the Illinois Medieval Association* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), pp. 57–67.

⁵⁰ The words in capitals indicate where a kenning is used in the verse text.

That is to say: ‘I seldom conceal the name of a woman, because people who understand poetry would very quickly find it out’.

Arinbjörn describes the first of the two verses as *mansqngr*. Of course this cannot be the kind of poem the other narrative or religious sources mean by the term *mansqngr*. Both of Egill’s verses demand to be placed in quite a different context by virtue of their content. They thematize a well-known motif of courtly love: the poet must conceal his love for the adored woman, and he complains that she takes no notice of him. Given this, it is hard to believe that Egill himself composed these verses. They could well have been composed in his name at a time when the themes of courtly love had reached as far as the northern lands.

Strangely enough, the other instances of *mansqngr* used in a neutral sense also occur in combination with courtly love motifs. The *Jómsvíkingadrápa* of Bjarni Kolbeinsson, Bishop of Orkney (1188–1222) recounts the battle of the Jómsvíkingar and the Norwegians. One of the central figures in this romanticized portrayal is the young Jómsvíkingr Vagn, who has sworn to marry the daughter of his enemy. The defeated Jómsvíkingar are executed, but Vagn performs a *mansqngr* about his beloved as he is about to be killed.⁵¹ This not only saves his neck but also helps him win his beloved, Ingibjörg, as Eirekr jarl intercedes with her father on Vagn’s behalf. No conclusions about the character of this *mansqngr* can be drawn from the immediate context of the verse. However the atmosphere the *stef* casts over the rest of the poem hardly implies an obscene poem, but rather one which expresses longing for the beloved. In the *stef* of the *Jómsvíkingadrápa* the poet repeatedly testifies that the wife of a nobleman has robbed him of all joy.⁵² This clearly shows that the ideas of the troubadour lyric had arrived in the North.⁵³

The same is true of the example in *Málsháttakvæði*, a versified proverb-collection which some scholars have wished to attribute to Bjarni Kolbeinsson.⁵⁴ Judging by its language, it could certainly have been composed in the Orkneys. The word *mansqngr* occurs in st. 20, whose theme is the blindness of love:

⁵¹ ‘Ok með fjornis fölu fór Þorketill leira, þás menbroti mælti mansqng of Gnó hringa’, st. 42/1–4 (*Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 9) (‘Þorketill leira took the giantess of the helmet [AXE] when the ring-breaker [GENEROUS RULER] spoke a *mansqngr* about the Gná of rings [WOMAN]’).

⁵² ‘Einn drepr fyr mér allri [. . .] ítrmanns kona teiti’, sts. 15, 19, 23, etc. (*Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 4–8) (‘A nobleman’s wife destroys all joy for me’). *Teiti* ‘joy’ might be thought to correspond here with the key term of courtly love, OFr. *joie*, MHG *vröude*.

⁵³ Bjarni Einarsson, *Skáldasögur*, pp. 19–20.

⁵⁴ See Anne Holtmark, ‘Bjarne Kolbeinsson og hans forfatterskap’, *Edda*, 37 (1937), 1–17.

Ástblindir 'ro seggir svá
sumir, at þykkja mjök fás gá,
(þannig verður of mansöng mælt)
marga hefr þat hyggna tælt.⁵⁵

(Some men are so blinded by love
that they seem to notice very little
(such is said about the *mansöngur*);
that has cost many intelligent people their understanding.)

The *stef*, which again speaks of treacherous love — Haraldr hárfagri's bewitchment by the Finnish woman Snjófríðr is the exemplar here⁵⁶ — places this poem in a context of the sufferings of love as well.

The context of the instance in *Tristrams saga* suggests that the *mansöngur* composed by Tristan consists of expressions of longing and the torments of love. This *mansöngur* is also connected with music:

ok sakir þeirrar Ísondar, er hann bar harm fyrir, þá ræddi hann um ástarþokka við hana, ok hun hánúm, ok gærði hann þá marga mansöngva með fögrum skáldskap ok snjallri orðaskipan allskonar strengleika, ok nefndi í söngunum optliga at atkvæðum Ísond.⁵⁷

(and on account of this Ísond, whom he felt sorrow over, he then spoke of his love for her, and she for him, and he composed many *mansöngvar* in beautiful poetry and with the eloquent phrasing of all kinds of songs, and he often used the name Ísond in his songs.)

Reasonably enough, a line of development has been drawn from here to the conventionalized *mansöngur* of *rímur*-poetry,⁵⁸ where every *ríma* division begins with a *mansöngur*, a stereotyped love-complaint which usually has nothing to do with the narrative. It is questionable, however, whether the genealogy actually

⁵⁵ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 143.

⁵⁶ 'Ekki var þat forðum farald, | Finnann gat þó ærðan Harald, | hönum þótti sólþjót sú, | slíks dæmi verður mörghum nú': *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 140–41. ('In the old days it wasn't a contagion [to love], nonetheless the Finn managed to drive Harald mad; to him she seemed as bright as the sun; such things happen to many now.')

⁵⁷ *Tristrams Saga ok Ísondar*, ed. by Eugen Kölbing (Heilbronn: Henniger, 1878), p. 83.

⁵⁸ Jón Þorkelsson, *Om digtningen på Island i det 15. og 16. århundrede* (Copenhagen: Høst, 1888), pp. 121–22; Holtsmark, 'Kjærlighetsdigtning', p. 439; Bjarni Einarsson, *To skjaldesagaer*, p. 24. Jónas Kristjánsson, *Eddas and Sagas: Iceland's Medieval Literature*, trans. by Peter Foote (Reykjavik: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1992), p. 111, explains the *stef* of *Jómsvíkingadrápa* thus: 'This is reminiscent of the *planh*, the amorous complaint of the French troubadours, and it also points forward to the *mansöngvar*, the introductory stanzas which *rímur*-poets often addressed in conventional love-terms to women'; see also pp. 380–81.

goes back to poems such as *Málsháttakvæði* and *Jómsvíkingadrápa*, or whether one should not rather assume the existence of an oral tradition connected with dance-songs. Songs for dancing are testified to by scattered mentions in *Sturlunga saga*; the wedding at Reykjahólar, though an earlier witness, is more doubtful.⁵⁹

The Paths of Mansqngr

This survey has resulted in a tripartition of the occurrences of *mansqngr*:

- in narrative schemata in the *Íslendingasögur*, and in *Grágás*, *mansqngr* is depicted as an act corresponding to *níð*, about whose exact character nothing precise is said;
- in religious texts it appears as an obscene or at least strongly erotically-coloured kind of poetry, which is to be combated;
- in the two poems from the Orkneys, in *Egils saga*, and later in the *rímur*, the *mansqngr* appears in the context of (courtly) love complaint.

If we now attempt to define the genre itself more closely on this basis, we should return to the term itself and recognize that the characterization in the religious texts is closest to that suggested by the word *mansqngr*. The reason for this is probably not that the *mansqngr* belongs in the clerical realm; but the name might have stemmed from there.

The story of Jón Ögmundarson's struggle against indecent songs recalls the bans, complaints, and reproofs of clerics and councils who got agitated about 'cantica turpia et luxuriosa' ('shameful and voluptuous songs'), 'puellarum cantica' ('maidens' songs'), and 'illecebra cantica et lusus secularis' ('provocative songs and secular diversions').⁶⁰ The fact that dancing was involved is suggested in *Jóns saga helga* by the words *leikr* and *dans*; for the western European parallels, that is, capitularies and synodal decisions from the sixth century onwards, note the common combination of interdicts against dancing and singing, for example 'ballationes et saltationes, canticaque turpia' ('dancing and leaping, and shameful songs') and 'lusa diabolica' ('devilish diversions').⁶¹ What provoked the Church's

⁵⁹ See Sigfús Blöndal, 'Dans i Island', pp. 165–76; Knut Liestøl, 'Til spørsmålet om dei eldste islendske dansekvæde', *Arv*, 1 (1945), 69–100 (pp. 71–76); Jón Helgason, 'Norges og Islands digtning', pp. 159–60; Bjarni Einarsson, *Skáldasögur*, pp. 16–18.

⁶⁰ Peter Dronke, *Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric*, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), I, 28.

⁶¹ Gustav Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters*, 2nd rev. edn, 2 vols (Munich: Beck, 1932), I, 29: 'Nullus Christianus neque ad ecclesiam neque in

ill-humour is usually thought to have been choral dance-songs, probably due to their erotic content. Occasionally these songs also had heathen overtones. The H redaction of *Jóns saga helga* speaks of the Bishop forbidding *forneskja*, which corresponds with the ban of Benedictus Levita, 'quia hoc de paganorum consuetudine remansit' ('since that is derived from the pagans' manners').⁶²

Examples of such choral dance songs, the precursors of medieval dance-ballads, include the Romance *carole* (albeit not extant before the twelfth century); the story of the dancers of Kölbigk;⁶³ and possibly an erotic dance with stag masks for which a fragmentary but sexually suggestive OHG text survives ('hirez rûnēta

domibus neque in triuiis nec in nullo loco ballationes, cantationis, iocus et lusa diabolica facire non presumat' ('No Christian may presume to perform dances, songs, jokes and devilish games, neither at church nor in houses nor at crossroads nor other places'); 'ballationis et saltationis uel cantica turpia et luxuriosa uelut sagitta diabolica fugite nec ad ipsas ecclesias nec in domibus uestris nec in plateis nec in ullo alio loco facire non presumatis, quia hoc de paganorum consuetudine remansit' ('flee from dancing and jumping or shameful and voluptuous songs as from the devil's arrow and don't presume to perform them either near the churches themselves, nor in your houses, nor in the streets, nor at any other place, since that is derived from the pagans' manners'). The synod of Châlon-sur-Saône, held between 639 and 654, demanded that people who gathered for parish fairs and saints' feasts not sing indecent and ugly songs for female dancers (Georg Baesecke, *Vor- und Frühgeschichte des deutschen Schrifttums*, 2 vols (Halle: Niemeyer, 1940), I, 356). A further example is from Otfried of Weißenburg, who in his dedication to the Archbishop of Mainz speaks of the *cantus obscœnus laicorum* ('obscene song of laymen'), the *ludus* ('play'), and the *sonus inutilium* ('useless noise') which will be supplanted by his works. On this issue, compare Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, pp. 28–30; Kjell Adamson, 'Dans', in *Kulturhistorisk leksikon*, ed. by Danstrup and others, II, cols 651–58; Robert Nedoma, 'Tanz', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd rev. edn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–), xxx (2005), 285–89; Wolfgang Haubrichs, 'Die Anfänge: Versuche volkssprachiger Schriftlichkeit im frühen Mittelalter', in *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit*, ed. by Joachim Heinzle (Königstein: Athenäum, 1984–), I: *Von den Anfängen zum hohen Mittelalter* (1984), pp. 92–96; Heusler, *Die altgermanische Dichtung*, pp. 43–4, 98–99; however, Heusler is strongly of the opinion that dancing is not genuinely Germanic: 'Da (sic) ist eine Tatsache ersten Ranges, daß das nordische Altertum nicht tanzt' (p. 42; 'It is a fact of the first rank that the Nordic Middle Ages does not dance').

⁶² Cited from Ehrismann, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur*, p. 29.

⁶³ The existence of an eleventh-century vernacular dance song for a ringleader and lead singer is evidenced by a legend telling how the participants in a wanton bride-robbery dance were punished by a magical compulsion to dance which lasted for a year. The legend contains a short Latin verse from which a Low German version has been reconstructed; it suggests a bride-robbery fable as the original context. For a summary, see Edith Marold, 'Liebesdichtung', in *Reallexikon*, ed. by Beck and others, XVIII (2001), 363–70, 378–85.

hintūn in daz ōra, uuildū noh hinta' ('the stag whispered in the hind's ear, "do you want more?"). Women seem to have played a significant role in these dances. Regino of Prüm (tenth century) mentions the priest's obligation to warn people 'that in the ante-room of the church they may not sing nor may women perform round dances'.⁶⁴ In the song about St Faro (Meaux in the Île de France) a circle of women singing at the dance is mentioned.⁶⁵ However the Church did not hold this female role in high esteem: Jaque de Vitry compares the leading singer at such a dance with the leading cow in a herd, who leads the line of dancers in a ring around the Devil and into Hell.⁶⁶ Some researchers⁶⁷ suppose that maiden-songs developed out of these dances, which in certain regions — southern Germany, in the 'Donauländischer Minnesang'; Portugal — constituted a pre-courtly layer of *Minnesang* or troubadour lyric respectively.⁶⁸ The Old English love poems *Wulf and Eadwacer* and *The Wife's Lament* (both ninth century/c. 900) are comparable to these, and both can be interpreted as women's love complaints.⁶⁹ On the basis of comparative ethnographic literary studies, scholars such as Theodor Frings have argued that the maiden-song is virtually a universal type of early love poetry. In his comparative investigations Frings elaborated the characteristic types of an ancient popular love poetry, in which a woman is both speaker and dominant figure, active, but also suffering and full of longing.⁷⁰ One of these song-types is the dance-song, whose speaker is a girl.

⁶⁴ Cited from Haubrichs, 'Die Anfänge', pp. 92–93.

⁶⁵ See Haubrichs, 'Die Anfänge', p. 93.

⁶⁶ See Adamson, 'Dans', col. 653.

⁶⁷ The connection of round-dances and dance-songs with maiden-songs is particularly emphasized in Romance research (Gaston Paris, *Mélanges de littérature française du Moyen Âge* (Paris: Champion, 1912), pp. 608–12), with reference to the *carole*.

⁶⁸ Frings, 'Minnesinger und Troubadours', p. 19. Two songs from the *Carmina burana* could represent a sort of transition between the two. The Benediktbeuren manuscript (from the first half of the thirteenth century) includes some German poems in its last part. Two of them have been suspected of being old dance-songs: *Gruonet der walt allenthalben* 'The forest turns green everywhere' (Frings, 'Minnesinger und Troubadours', p. 15) and *Swaz hie gât umbe* 'Whoever is wandering about'. In both songs a young woman is the speaker.

⁶⁹ Compare Christiane Zimmermann, 'Altenglische Liebesdichtung', in *Reallexikon*, ed. by Beck and others, XVIII (2001), 370–78.

⁷⁰ See Theodor Frings, 'Erforschung des Minnesangs', *Forschungen und Fortschritte*, 26 (1950), 9–13, 39–42, and *Die Anfänge der europäischen Liebesdichtung im 11. und 12. Jh.*, Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, 1960/2 (Munich: Beck, 1960).

This short overview shows that Jón Ögmundarson's condemnation of indecent dances and *mansqng* is akin to the verdicts of innumerable European clerics. The question, though, is whether it is evidence for the existence of this type of choral dance-song in Iceland. The value of the relevant passage from *Jóns saga helga* as a source for conditions during Jón's lifetime has often been doubted, and it is assumed instead that Gunnlaugr, the author of the saga, knew of such dance songs from his own experience.⁷¹ Apart from this there is virtually no sign of the independent existence of such a genre before the western European dance-ballad came to the North. Liestøl is able to point to passages in *Sturlunga saga* which suggest these ring-dances already existed at least by the second half of the twelfth century.⁷² However, it could also be the case that when the author of *Jóns saga* came to compose his biography of the saintly Bishop Jón he fell back on Continental models and their protagonists' battles against *cantica puellarum*, 'maiden songs'.⁷³

Viewed in this context, the word *mansqng* could be explained as a name for this kind of maiden-song and so possibly as a loan translation of the Lat. *cantus puellarum*. *Man* is a word for 'maiden, female servant', no longer extant in prose,⁷⁴ and *sqng* is the usual translation of Lat. *cantus*. That would explain why, in contradistinction to other names for poetic genres, the word *sqng* is used here. The supposition that *mansqng* is a loan translation of a Latin expression, probably originating in clerical circles, of course tells us nothing about whether such choral and maiden-songs had existed as a popular genre in Iceland all along, or whether in fact they first arose in association with the arrival of the dance-ballad in the country. But it allows us to define the *mansqng* as a dance song for individual or choral performance, corresponding to a common European popular genre. With this definition, a number of the problems associated with the *mansqng* can be resolved:

⁷¹ See Jón Helgason, 'Norges og Islands digtning', p. 159: 'Det eneste man kan bygge på denne meget upålidelige kilde, er at Gunnlaugr måske har kendt noget lignende fra sin samtid.' ('The only thing one can rely on in this very untrustworthy source is that Gunnlaugr perhaps knew something like it from his own times.') Blöndal, 'Dans i Island', p. 165; Liestøl, 'Til spørgsmålet', p. 70; de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 96; and Bjarni Einarsson, *To skjaldesagaer*, p. 17 express similar doubts about the value of *Jóns saga* as a source.

⁷² Liestøl, 'Til spørgsmålet', pp. 76–78.

⁷³ Holtsmark ('Kjærlighetsdigtning', p. 439) thinks *Jóns saga helga* is not a very trustworthy source; Bjarni Einarsson assesses it similarly (*Skáldasögur*, p. 2).

⁷⁴ It appears in the *Poetic Edda* in *Helgakviða Hundingsbana II* st. 4 and *Grottasqng* st. 1, and is well-attested in skaldic verse (Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, p. 392).

1. As the *mansqngr* belongs in this unwritten, ‘subliterary’ domain, it is not to be expected that such songs would have been preserved.
2. Skaldic love poetry is distinct from the *mansqngr*, as:
 - a) skaldic poems are not sung (cf. *mansqngr*);
 - b) these poems consistently have male speakers (cf. *mansqngr*);
 - c) their literary-sociological setting is different.
3. This explains:
 - a) why skaldic love poems are never designated as *mansqngr* (apart from a single instance);
 - b) why skaldic love poems were not subject to legal sanction and were transmitted virtually unhindered.

One question, however, remains: how can we account for the various meanings of *mansqngr* in the Icelandic tradition, as surveyed in the foregoing analysis? An interpretation as erotic choral or maiden-song could indeed explain the instances in the *Íslendingasögur*, in the religious texts, and in *Grágás*, but not the neutral use of *mansqngr* meaning ‘love poem’. If we take our point of departure from the *mansqngr* as maiden-song — whether indigenous or imported — then the various traditions may be explained as having their origins in two types of maiden-song. Songs which invited their auditors to enjoy love’s pleasures fell victim to the judgement of the Church (see *Jóns saga helga*) and ended up as part of the narrative schema of *níð*. It is remarkable how almost all the sagas in which *mansqngr* plays a role have close contact with the clerical world. Both *Vatnsdæla saga* and *Hallfredar saga* have literary connections with Þingeyrar. From the style and diction of *Vatnsdæla saga* Einar Ól. Sveinsson concludes that the author was a cleric closely associated with the school at Þingeyrar.⁷⁵ The author of *Hallfredar saga* has links with Þingeyrar as well: he probably knew Gunnlaugr’s *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, and perhaps also his *Jóns saga*.⁷⁶ *Fóstbræðra saga* follows on from the

⁷⁵ *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, pp. xiii, xxiii, liii. See also de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, II, 401.

⁷⁶ *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ól. Sveinsson, pp. lxi–lxiii. ‘En ekki sýnist hún verða tengd við neinar sérstakar ættir á þeim slóðum, eins og t. d. Vatnsdæla, og ekki mun ættrækni vera undirrót ritunar hennar. Hitt er sönnu nær, að hún sé sprottin upp af sagnaritun á Þingeyrum, saga kristniboðskonungsins dró á eftir sér sögu skálds hans. Með þessu er ekkert um það sagt, hvort hún sé skrifuð á Þingeyraskólanum og ber ærin merki þess. Hér eru miklar munnlega heimildir, sagnir og kvæðafróðleikur, hér er efni að nokkru séð í trúarlegu ljósi og á köflum kryddað með helgisögnum’ (pp. lxxiii–lxxiv). (‘But it does not seem to be connected with any particular family in that area, as for example *Vatnsdæla* is, and genealogical connections may not have been the

traditions about St Óláfr in a comparable way, and its author is also often assumed to have been a cleric, or at least to have possessed some clerical learning and to have had contacts with Þingeyrar.⁷⁷ Close links with the clerical world, and indeed in some cases connections with Þingeyrar, can therefore be established for the majority of those sagas in which *mansqng* plays a role. It is conceivable that the term *mansqng* spread from Þingeyrar, a process in which a generalization of its meaning to 'obscene poem about a woman' must rapidly have taken place and enabled this generic term to fulfil similar narrative functions to that of *níð*. Another consequence of this was the insertion of *mansqng* into legal provisions concerning *níð*.

A second type of maiden-song, the lover's complaint, constituted its own tradition in combination with the concept of courtly love. To this tradition belong the two poems from the Orkneys (*Jómsvíkingadrápa* and *Málsháttakvæði*) and the verse in *Egils saga*. A developmental line probably leads on from here, perhaps through the dance-ballads, to the *mansaungur*, those typical refrain-verses whose stereotyped theme is love lament. The fact that this second type of poem also bears the name *mansqng* is probably connected with the beginnings of this strand in clerical circles — think for example of Bishop Bjarni Kolbeinsson and his love lament in *Jómsvíkingadrápa*. With the assumption that the term *mansqng* 'maiden-song' arose in religious circles and was generalized in one direction to mean a forbidden, obscene poem by a man about or to a woman, and in another to courtly love-complaint, we may arrive at an explanation not only of the problems associated with the name of the genre, but also at an explanation for the absence of any extant *mansqng* verses and the presence of a corpus of skaldic love poetry, unconstrained by legal sanctions.

impetus for its composition. Rather it seems that it sprang from the saga-writing activities at Þingeyrar: in the wake of the saga of the missionary king came the saga of his skald. This says nothing about whether it was written by the Þingeyrar school, though it bears considerable marks of this. There is much from oral sources, stories and learning about poetry, and the material is to some degree seen in a devotional light and in some parts spiced up with material from saints' lives.) Cf. also de Vries, *Altnordische Literaturgeschichte*, p. 398.

⁷⁷ *Vestfirðinga sögur*, ed. by Björn K. Þórólfsson and Guðni Jónsson, p. lxxiv: 'Þá er ekki ólíklegt, að höfundur Fóstbræðra sögu hafi haft vitneskju um rit Ara fróða og ritstörf Þingeyramunka, enda mun Elzta sagan um Ólaf helga einmitt vera samin þar í klaustrinu.' ('It is not unlikely that the author of *Fóstbræðra saga* had some knowledge of Ari's writings and the works of the monks of Þingeyrar, and moreover that the *Oldest Saga of St. Óláfr* was compiled right there in the monastery.')

SKALDIC POETRY AND PERFORMANCE

Stefanie Würth

Skaldic poetry is generally regarded as a highly artificial literary art. In the Middle Ages the poems were probably already very difficult to understand, and this might also be the reason for their poor transmission. A lot of research has been done on the skalds' social position and their function within society, but hardly anything is known about communication between the skalds and their audiences, let alone whether and how the audience understood the poems.¹ The question of the nature of the oral performance and aural reception of skaldic poems is an intriguing one, since some skaldic poems are the only witnesses of Old Norse-Icelandic literature which was definitely produced in pre-literary times and which was definitely performed and transmitted orally. As Roberta Frank notes:

By 900, the Norse poets had constructed a separate syntax or language of metaphorical expression that usually depended for its decoding as much on previous knowledge and training as on a feeling for, or observation of, nature.²

From a modern point of view skaldic language is a 'language of distance', intended for reception through reading, whereas it shows no signs of being a 'language of

¹ Some statements about performance are rather speculative. See for instance Gabriel Turville-Petre, who observes that the Icelandic verb *kveða* is used to denote performance, and then concludes: 'This may imply that the verses were chanted on varying notes following the syntactical pattern. If declaimed this way, a verse [...] would be more readily understood than it is when read in a monotone.' *Scaldic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), pp. lxx–lxxi. But even though his assumption might seem reasonable there is no way of proving it.

² Roberta Frank, 'Did Anglo-Saxon Audiences Have a Skaldic Tooth?', *Scandinavian Studies*, 59 (1987), 338–55 (p. 339).

closeness', intended for aural reception.³ It has often been stated that the oldest skaldic poem, the shield-poem *Ragnarsdrápa* composed by Bragi Boddason in the ninth century, already exhibits the main characteristics of the genre: it contains alliteration as well as internal rhyme according to the rules of *dróttkvætt*, the *kenningar* allude to mythological events, the syntax deviates significantly from prose word order, and the vocabulary is very specialized.

Compared to other Germanic genres skaldic poetry is highly problematic. Although historically it is oral poetry, with respect to content and form it contradicts everything that is usually considered to be characteristic of oral poetry: skaldic poetry is neither paratactic nor are its sentences rhythmically structured; it does not use formulas; the person reciting a poem or stanza has only very limited opportunities for improvisation; there is hardly any plot, which might be used as a thread when trying to understand the stanza or poem; the stanzas and even some of the longer poems are either descriptions or they refer to very specific events. Scholars have tried to escape the dilemma of an oral poetry without any features of oral poetry by assuming that skaldic poetry was composed by and for an elitist group and only insiders were able to understand the poems. But to date it has only been established — but not conclusively — that skaldic poetry, at least skaldic praise poetry, was intended for a social elite. Whether this social elite can be identified with an intellectual elite, which was keen on complicated verbal games, is still an open question.

In what follows I want to deal with the contemporary performance of skaldic poetry and its audience. How or how far did the audience understand the stanzas or poems? Can we compare this kind of understanding with our modern approaches to skaldic poetry? In the first part of my essay, 'performance' is used in the sense 'recitation on stage'. But later on when discussing stanzas in the context of saga literature the meaning of 'performance' will be widened to mean 'material representation of messages during the act of writing'. This meaning will then be

³ The terms 'language of distance' and 'language of closeness' are taken from Peter Koch and Wulf Oesterreicher, 'Sprache der Nähe – Sprache der Distanz: Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit im Spannungsfeld von Sprachtheorie und Sprachgeschichte', *Romanistisches Jahrbuch*, 36 (1985 [1986]), 15–43. Usually texts in a language of distance are more or less identical with written texts. But with respect to skaldic poetry we have to acknowledge that an automatic identification of language of distance with written literature is not possible. On the other hand it makes no sense to use the dichotomy oral–written in connection with skaldic poetry because it *is* oral poetry, although it shows features of written texts.

supplemented by ‘performance’ in the sense of ‘imaginative reconstruction during the act of reading’.⁴

In skaldic poetry there is a striking opposition between content and form. Whereas the content of the poems and stanzas is quite often related to personal experience, their form is highly artificial and characterized by very strict and complicated rules. In Old Norse-Icelandic saga literature individual opinions are usually expressed by the protagonists in direct speech. Although the narrator thus refrains from comments and dissociates himself from personal statements, the language more or less corresponds to everyday oral language. In skaldic poetry, however, the skalds express personal opinions and experiences; they are private opinions, but a dissociating element is implied by the strictly controlled and complicated form of the language. Although saga prose and skaldic poetry differ from each other with respect to form and content, they nevertheless correspond to each other with respect to dissociating themselves from personal matters — they just go about it in different ways.

If skalds deal with personal matters, but in a dissociating way, several questions arise: Why did the skalds choose to do this? How did the audience react to this kind of poetry, be it praise-poetry or occasional stanzas? To what extent did the audience understand the poems? Did the audience concentrate on only one aspect: content, form, or sound? Or did these aspects rather complement each other in giving a general impression? Did the audience try to decode the poems as we do, that is, on a syntactical level as well as on a metaphorical level? To put it briefly: how can we imagine the performance and reception of skaldic poems? Can we propose parallels to the performance and reception of saga prose?

Across the range of literary sources, poems as well as prose, there are only very stereotyped examples of skaldic performance.⁵ The most famous is the first performance of *Geisli*, composed in 1152 by Einarr Skúlason in praise of the Norwegian king St Óláfr who had died 120 years before:

Einar S. s. var með þeim bróðrum S. oc Eysteini. oc var Eysteinn konvngur mikill vin hans.
oc Eysteinn konvngur bað hann til at yrkja Olafs drapo. oc hann orti. oc fór þi norðr
í Þrandheime í Kristz kirkio sialfri oc var þat með miclom iartegnom. oc kom dyrligr ilmr

⁴ These definitions of performance are drawn from Uwe Wirth, *Performanz: Zwischen Sprachphilosophie und Kulturwissenschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2002), p. 4.

⁵ Bjarne Fidjestøl collected and analysed c. fifty examples in “‘Have You Heard a Poem Worth More?’: A Note on the Economic Background of Early Skaldic Praise-poetry”, in his *Selected Papers*, ed. by Odd Einar Haugen and Else Mundal, trans. by Peter Foote, Viking Collection, 9 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1997), pp. 117–32.

ikirkiona. oc þat segia menn at þer amiNingar vrþo af konvnginom sialfum. at honom virþiz vel qveþit.⁶

(Einarr Skúlason was in the company of the brothers Sigurðr and Eysteinn, and King Eysteinn was a great friend of his. Eysteinn asked him to compose a poem in honor of Saint Óláfr, and he did so. He presented it north in Þrándheimr in the very confines of Christ Church, and it was accompanied by great miracles. A sweet fragrance rose in the church, and people say that there were intimations from the king himself that he thought well of the poem.)⁷

It says a lot about the nature of the sources that this passage is usually considered to be the main description of skaldic performance in the sense of ‘performance on stage’. A closer look at the text reveals that this passage does not really reveal anything about how skaldic poems were performed. The main information it contains is that the *Óláfsdrápa* was composed on request and that the skald himself recited the poem on a festive occasion. But what the performance actually looked like remains open. Nor does the passage report anything about the audience’s reactions; the only reaction is from the late King, for whom the praise-poem was composed. Nevertheless we may draw an important conclusion from this example: a skaldic poem or stanza operates as a sign when it is performed in a specific setting and for a specific occasion. In the passage quoted above the content of the poem is of only secondary importance. The poem’s function as praise can clearly be separated from the meaning of the poem’s words: if the setting for the performance was festive and if the praise was commissioned from a skald, that is, a professional panegyric, then the audience will trust the skald that his *drápa* fulfils all the expected requirements. In our case the King who is being praised himself acknowledges the skald’s performance by means of a miracle. But we are not told whether Einarr’s immediate audience was able to understand the text of the poem or if they only realized that it was a literary work of art. In the end what, according to Paul Zumthor, holds true for oral poetry in general must hold true for skaldic poetry as well: ‘The listener follows the thread; no going back is possible: whatever the desired effect, the message has to make itself heard from the

⁶ *Morkinskinna*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 53 (Copenhagen: Jørgensen, 1932), p. 446.

⁷ The translation is from *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, trans. by Theodore M. Andersson and Kari Ellen Gade, Islandica, 51 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), p. 393.

start.⁸ The question is whether the message is contained in the form or in the words of skaldic poetry.

In all the examples analysed by Bjarne Fidjestøl the poems have a semiotic function as works of art. Usually a skaldic performance follows a rather stereotyped pattern:⁹

1. A poet, who belongs to the king's retinue or who arrives at his court, has made a poem and asks permission to deliver it.
2. The ruler agrees.
3. The skald recites his poem. Either a fragment of it is quoted, or a brief description of it is given.
4. Sometimes what the audience thought of the poem is recorded.
5. After the recitation the prince gives the poet a handsome reward. This is the kernel of the stock scene.
6. Finally the prince invites the skald to stay with him as his *hirðmaðr*.

The narrators of the sagas obviously assume that it is always the composer himself who recites a poem. It never seems to be the case that a skald recites another skald's poem — as might be expected since the poems must have been transmitted orally for a very long time. It is striking that all episodes focus on the material value of the poems, that is, the skalds' rewards from the king. But in all cases it remains unclear whether this reward depends on the content of a poem or on the performance. One example, however, demonstrates that poems were evaluated according to formal criteria:

Þórarinn loftunga var maðr kallaðr. Hann var íslenzkr maðr at kyni, skáld mikit ok hafði verit mjök með konungum eða öðrum höfðingjum. Hann var með Knúti konungi inum ríka ok hafði ort um hann flokk. En er konungr vissi, at Þórarinn hafði ort flokk um hann, þá varð hann reiðr ok bað hann færa sér drápu um daginn eptir, þá er konungr sæti yfir borðum. Ef hann gerði eigi svá, þá segir konungr, at Þórarinn myndi uppi hanga fyrir dirfð þá, er hann hafði ort dræpling um Knút konung. Þórarinn orti þá stef og setti í kvæðit ok jók nokkurum ørendum eða vísum. Þetta er stefit:

Knútr ver grund sem gætir
Gríklands himinríki.

Knútr konungr launaði kvæðit fimm tígum marka silfrs. Sú drápa er kǫlluð Höfuðlausn.¹⁰

⁸ Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, trans. by Kathryn Murphy-Judy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 98. Zumthor also points out that there are many different forms of oral poetry, which can be very complex on a syntactic level as well as on a lexical level.

⁹ The following six steps in the pattern correspond to those set out by Bjarne Fidjestøl in "Have You Heard a Poem Worth More?", pp. 119–20.

¹⁰ [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslenzk fornrit, 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1945–51), II, 307–08.

(There was a man called Þórarinn loftunga. He was an Iclander by descent, a famous skald, who had spent a lot of time with kings or other important men. He was staying with King Knútr and had composed a *flokkr* about him. But when the King found out that Þórarinn had composed a *flokkr* about him, he became angry and ordered Þórarinn to present him with a *drápa* the next day when the King was having his meal. If he did not, the King said Þórarinn would be hanged because of his boldness, since he had only composed a minor poem [*dreplíngr*] about the King. Then Þórarinn composed a *stef* and inserted it into the poem and he also added some verses or stanzas. This is the *stef*:

Knútr defends the land

just as Greece's guardian defends heaven

King Knútr rewarded the performance of the poem with five marks of silver. This *drápa* is called *Höfuðlausn* [Head ransom].)

The King criticizes the poem because of its poor quality, which is not due to its disrespectful content, however, but to its inadequate form: the poem lacks a *stef* (that is, a stanza with a refrain) and without a *stef* it is not an adequate praise poem for a king. The King considered the poem to be a serious insult since he threatened the skald with death. But when the skald had corrected this formal fault the King was pleased and rewarded him, although Þórarinn had apparently not altered the content.

In this respect the episode supports the assumption that skaldic poetry was intended for a social and intellectual elite. Those who did not belong to this inner circle of specially trained insiders could only take skaldic poetry as a sign representing respect, esteem, and valuation. The skald gives his poem to the king as a verbal sign of esteem and as a reward he gets a material sign of esteem, usually a precious sword, expensive clothes, or jewelry. In these cases the performance of the poem is a performative speech-act; that is, the performance itself is the praise rather than the content of the poem.

But not all skaldic poetry is praise poetry. In the Icelandic family sagas there are many *lausavísur* which are most often presented as improvisations. How should we imagine the performance of these stanzas? Usually improvisations provoke a reaction, be it a verbal or a physical reaction, as for instance by gestures or by mimicry. But unfortunately the narrative context hardly ever incorporates the *lausavísur* in a communicative situation, as this example from *Egils saga* shows:

Þá tók Egill við horni því, er Bárðr hafði fengit Olvi, ok drakk af; Bárðr sagði, at hann þyrsti mjök, ok færði honum þegar hornit fullt ok bað hann af drekka. Egill tók við horninu ok kvað vísu:

Sögðuð sverri flagða

sumbleklu ér, kumbla,

því telk, brjótr, þars blétuð,

bragðvísan þik, dísir;

leynduð alls til illa
 ókunna þér runna,
 illt hafð bragð of brugðit,
 Bárðr, hugar fari.

Bárðr bað hann drekka ok hætta flimtun þeiri. Egill drakk full hvert, er at honum kom, ok svá fyrir Qlvi. Þá gekk Bárðr til dróttningar ok sagði henni, at þar var maðr sá, er skommm færði at þeim ok aldregi drakk svá, at eigi segði hann sik þyrsta. Dróttning ok Bárðr blönduðu þá drykkinn ólyfjani ok báru þá inn; signdi Bárðr fullit, fékk síðan Qlseljunni; færði hon Agli ok bað hann drekka. Egill brá þá knífi sínum ok stakk í lófa sér; hann tók við horninu ok reist á rúnar ok reið á blóðinu. Hann kvað:

Ristum rún á horni,
 rjóðum spjöll í dreyra,
 þau velk orð til eyrna
 óðs dýrs viðar róta;
 drekkum veig sem viljum
 vel glýjaðra þýja,
 vitum, hve oss of eiri
 Ql, þats Bárðr signdi.

Hornit sprakk í sundr, en drykkurinn fór niðr í hálm.¹¹

(Then Egill took the horn, which Bárðr had first passed to Qlvir, and drank from it. Bárðr said that he must be very thirsty, and immediately passed him another full horn and told him to drink it. Egill took the horn and recited a stanza:

You told the trolls' enemy [> man],
 you lacked beer there where
 you sacrificed to the goddesses;
 therefore I call you a guileful man.
 Much too badly have you
 hidden your hostility
 among men unknown to you;
 you behaved badly, Bárðr.

Bárðr told him to drink and to stop this mockery. Every time Egill got the vessel, he drank all of his share as well as Qlvir's. Then Bárðr went to the queen and told her that there was a man there who was a disgrace to them and who never drank without saying that he was still thirsty. Then the queen and Bárðr mixed a poisonous drink and brought it in. Bárðr blessed the horn and passed it to the servant. She passed it to Egill and asked him to drink it. Then Egill drew his knife and stabbed it into his palm. Then he accepted the horn, scratched runes onto it, and dyed them with his blood. He spoke:

We scored runes into the horn,
 reddened the words with blood.
 These words I chose

¹¹ *Egils saga Skalla-Grimssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1933), pp. 108–09.

for the angry animal's ear-root [> the edge of the horn].
 We drink as we like
 from the sprightly servant's brew.
 We know how salubrious the beer is
 that is blessed by Bárðr.

The horn broke into pieces and the drink ran into the straw.)

Although Egill's stanza is supposed to be an answer to a question, the following action is not presented as a reaction to his stanza. In the narrative context the first stanza is called a *níð-vísa*, that is, a stanza of insult or curse. This identification explains the function of the stanza, even if the audience did not understand the content in every detail. The mocking, unserious intention also becomes clear from the second line of the stanza, which attracts the listeners' attention by its marked internal rhyme: 'sumbleklu þér, kumbla'. The mocking becomes onomatopoeically clear, although the verbal meaning of the line is not immediately comprehensible. The function of the second stanza in the passage is obviously magical since it causes the drinking-horn to burst. Therefore this stanza should also be considered as performative speech-act.

In addition, there are other stanzas which provoke verbal or physical reactions:

Egill stóð upp ok gekk til rúms þess, er dóttir jarlsins hafði setit um daginn. En er menn skipuðusk í sæti sín, þá gekk jarlsdóttir at rúmi sínu; hon kvað:

Hvat skaltu, sveinn, í sess minn?
 Þvít þú sjaldan hefr gefnar
 vargi varmar bráðir,
 vesa vilk ein of mína;
 sáttaðu hrafn í hausti
 of hræsolli gjalla,
 vastaðu at, þars eggjar
 á skelþunnar runnusk.

Egill tók til hennar ok setti hana niðr hjá sér; hann kvað:

Farit hefk blóðgum brandi,
 svát mér benþiðurr fylgði,
 ok gjallanda geiri;
 gangr vas harðr af víkingum;
 gerðum reiðir róstu,
 rann eldr of sjöt manna,
 létum blóðga búka
 í borghliðum sæfask.

Þá drukku þau saman um kveldit ok váru allkát.¹²

¹² *Egils saga*, pp. 120–21.

(Egill stood up and went to the place where the jarl's daughter had been sitting during the day. Once people had chosen their places, the jarl's daughter went to her own place. She spoke:

What do you want, lad, at my seat?
 You have rarely given
 warm venison [> dead warriors] to the wolf,
 I want to have my place for myself.
 You haven't seen the raven in autumn
 screaming over the liquid of corpses [> blood].
 You weren't present when spearheads,
 sharp as shells, met each other.

Egill took her and set her down beside him. He spoke:

I have travelled with my sword drawn,
 so that the wood grouse of the wounds [> raven] followed me,
 and with my spear yelling.
 The vikings' attack was hard.
 We fought in a wrathful battle,
 fire raged in the people's houses.
 We let bloody corpses sink down
 by the walls of the castle.

Then they drank together all night long and were very cheerful.)

Egill responds with his stanza to the slightly mocking stanza recited by the jarl's daughter. He defends himself against the accusation of cowardice or lacking valour. The flirtation, masked in the stanzas, is continued later on when Egill and the girl are drinking together. But compared to many praise poems or shield poems, both Egill's stanza and the girl's are very simple in structure and therefore easily comprehensible. Egill's stanza consists of series of main clauses and is therefore not as syntactically complex as most other stanzas in *dróttkvætt* metre. The vocabulary of the stanza is also easily comprehensible compared with other skaldic stanzas. All the kennings in this stanza consist of only two elements which follow one another directly. For this reason it is rather easy for the audience to recognize and interpret the kennings. Since all the kennings are related to the semantic field of 'battle' they all denote stereotyped situations and could be readily understood even if every element is not in itself clear.¹³ The meaning of the stanzas could presumably be decoded by all the figures involved in the scene, and the stanzas can therefore be used by the narrator as part of the dialogue between Egill and the jarl's daughter. Although skaldic stanzas in general belong to a genre characterized

¹³ In this connection it is interesting that both stanzas are rather simple, but that Egill's (i.e. the man's) stanza is slightly more sophisticated than the woman's stanza.

by a language of distance, these two stanzas are nevertheless composed in a language of closeness. They are therefore also comprehensible to the members of the audience not immediately involved in the dialogue.

But who is this listening audience exactly? Until now I have implicitly pretended that all the passages quoted reflect real situations. Although all the foregoing examples are taken from literary sources, they might be representations of actual historical events. In this case the examples could be interpreted as written reproductions of oral performances in the sense of 'recitations on stage'. But do the literary sources actually represent a direct and mimetic relationship between text and historical context?

The problem is that all skaldic stanzas are preserved in literary contexts, although it is known that the oldest poems were composed in pre-literary times. In contrast to the situation with eddic poetry, there are no medieval manuscripts containing exclusively skaldic poetry. During manuscript transmission larger poems were often fragmented, inserted into new contexts, and related to new functions. In a prose context only single stanzas are usually quoted, often without any indication of whether the stanza is part of a larger poem. Most of the stanzas are preserved in the following genres:

Íslendingasögur (Icelandic family sagas)

konungasögur (kings' sagas)

Snorra Edda and the *Grammatical Treatises*

fornaldarsögur (legendary/heroic sagas)

Religious texts, mainly *biskupasögur* (bishops' sagas) and *postolasögur* (sagas of the Apostles)

From this large number of different literary sources it may be concluded that skaldic poetry was itself acknowledged as a literary genre. From the Prologue to Snorri's *Heimskringla* we know that skaldic poetry was regarded as an important historical source, but since non-historical genres also contain skaldic stanzas it seems that they were also valued from an aesthetic point of view. Since *Sturlunga saga*, which was written in the thirteenth century about contemporary events, also contains a large number of skaldic stanzas, it may be concluded that at this time skaldic poetry was still a productive genre and that the stanzas were not inserted purely out of antiquarian interest.¹⁴

¹⁴ Christian praise poems are another sign that skaldic poetry continued to be composed during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. These poems are, however, of less relevance to my argument here.

In Icelandic family sagas skaldic stanzas are closely integrated into the narrative context, because they are usually recited by persons who are involved in the saga plot.¹⁵ At first glance every stanza seems to be related to a specific situation and to be composed for exactly this occasion, as in the example from *Egils saga* quoted above. But looking more closely it can be seen that in many cases the stanzas prove to be less specific than the narrative context suggests. Quite often the content of a stanza is rather abstract and general, so that it can hardly be related to a particular situation — neither to a situation reported in the saga nor to a situation in the historical context.¹⁶ This is one of the reasons why scholars have repeatedly questioned the authenticity of particular stanzas. Back in 1957 Jón Helgason pointed out that there are several possible relationships between saga prose and skaldic stanza:¹⁷

1. The stanza was actually composed by the skald who recites it, and for the occasion it is connected with.
2. The stanza was composed by the skald who is said to be responsible for it, but for another occasion.
3. The stanza was composed by another skald than stated in the saga, but the saga author did not know that.
4. The stanza was composed by the saga author or somebody in his milieu. This is assumed for many *lausavísur* in Icelandic family sagas.
5. The stanza was composed after the saga was written and it was integrated into the narrative context by a later redactor.

Although in most cases it is very difficult to decide which of these is the case, it is clear that neither the authors of the sagas nor the audience related the quotations to actual performances of the stanzas. Skaldic stanzas in the sagas rarely reflect a situation of communication between people. This can be deduced from the absence of audience reaction in the text, among other things. Instead, the stanzas signify a communication between the saga narrator and the audience of the written saga. This communicative situation does not therefore refer to the *söguöld*

¹⁵ A considerable amount of research has been done on the literary function of stanzas and their narrative context. See Jürg Glauser, 'Gelegenheitsdichtung', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd rev. edn. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–), x (1998), 655, and Edith Marold, 'Lausavísur', in *ibid.*, xviii (2001), 139–41.

¹⁶ See the research report in Glauser, 'Gelegenheitsdichtung'.

¹⁷ Jón Helgason, 'Norges og Islands digtning', in *Litteratur-Historie B. Norge og Island*, ed. Sigurður Nordal, Nordisk kultur, 8B (Stockholm: Bonnier; Oslo: Aschehoug; Copenhagen: Schultz, 1953), pp. 3–179 (p. 144).

(the time when the plot of the saga is thought to have taken place), but to the period during which the saga was written and transmitted or performed, that is, from the thirteenth century onwards. As a consequence, the performance of skaldic stanzas in sagas is not a performance in the sense of a 'setting on stage', but in the sense of the 'material representation of a message during the act of writing'. The audience reacts to this performance through an 'imaginative reconstruction during the act of reading' or — when the text is read out — during the act of listening. As products of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the sagas present retrospective descriptions of skaldic performances according to the authors' and the audience's ideas of how the original staging might have taken place, but this kind of performance no longer corresponds to an actual historical situation in the past.

In Icelandic family sagas it is not usually the function of a stanza to present a person as a skald and a member of a social or intellectual elite. Rather, the stanzas are meant to highlight specific situations within the narrative context. In particular, they enable the figures in a saga to express their emotions or personal views. The recitation of a supposedly improvised stanza gives the impression of directness and spontaneity. In some cases, however, it is necessary to understand the wording of a stanza in order to understand its narrative context.¹⁸ But in these cases the content of the stanza is usually paraphrased in the surrounding prose or the stanza contains specific keywords which facilitate the comprehension of the central topic — just as in the example from *Egils saga* quoted above. In most cases the main point is to interpret the stanza as a 'sign': to decode the stanza's narrative function. It is only at a secondary level of interpretation that the audience must puzzle over the stanza's content.

In Icelandic family sagas most skaldic stanzas are not only presented as *lausavísur*, but they were actually probably also composed as single stanzas. Kings' sagas, however, mostly contain stanzas which were originally part of larger poems, usually praise poems. Since in Icelandic family sagas the protagonists usually recite stanzas in direct speech, skaldic poetry can have many different functions within the narrative context. In the kings' sagas, however, stanzas are usually quoted by the narrator as authentic evidence for the historical truth of his report. Poems which had originally been composed as an expression of the power and reputation of the praised ruler are disseminated as single stanzas and quoted as historical sources.

¹⁸ Bjarni Einarsson, 'On the Rôle of Verse in Saga-literature', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 7 (1974), 118–25 (p. 118).

Þá er Óláfr konungr gekk fram ór skjaldborginni ok í ǫndurða fylking ok bæendr sá í andlit honum, þá hræddusk þeir, ok fellusk þeim hendr. Þess getr Sigvatr:

Geirs hykk grimligt vǫru
gunnreifum Óleifi
loghreytǫndum líta
lóns í hvassar sjónir.
Þorðut þrænzkir fyrðar,
þótti hersa dróttinn
ógurligr, í augu
ormfrǫn séa hǫnum.

Þá varð allhǫrð orrosta. Gekk konungr hart fram sjálfr í hǫggorrostu. Svá segir Sigvatr:
[. . .]¹⁹

(When Óláfr left the stronghold of shields and went in front of his army, and the farmers looked at his face, they became afraid and their hands failed them. Sigvatr reports:

I think it was terrible
for the spender of the waves' flames [> generous men]
to look into the spear-edged eyes
of the battle-strong Óláfr.
The men from Tröndelag
did not dare
to look into his serpent-glittering eyes.
The leader of the hersir [> king]
seemed dreadful.

Then a very fierce battle began. The king himself took part vigorously in the exchange of blows. Sigvatr reports:

[. . .])

The skald Sigvatr, who for many years had been one of the King's liegemen, took part in the battle himself. As an eyewitness coming from the King's immediate neighbourhood, he was regarded as especially reliable in his descriptions.

In contrast to the situation on the Continent, where historiographic authors preferred prose texts as their sources, in Iceland poetic sources seem to have been thought of as particularly reliable. The most famous reference in this respect is the Prologue to *Heimskringla*:

En er Haraldr inn hárfagri var konungr í Nóregi, þá byggðisk Ísland. Með Haraldi konungi váru skáld, ok kunna menn enn kvæði þeira ok allra konunga kvæði, þeira er síðan hafa verit í Nóregi, ok tókum vér þar mest dæmi af, þat er sagt er í þeim kvæðum, er kveðin váru fyrir sjálfum hǫfðingjunum eða sonum þeira. Tókum vér þat allt fyrir satt, er í þeim kvæðum finnsk um ferðir þeira eða orrostur. En þat er háttir skálda at lofa þann mest, er þá eru þeir fyrir, en engi myndi þat þora at segja sjálfum honum þau verk hans, er

¹⁹ *Heimskringla*, II, 380–81.

allir þeir, er heyrði, vissi, at hégómi væri ok skrök, ok svá sjálfr hann. Þat væri þá háð, en eigi lof.²⁰

(When Haraldr *finehair* was king of Norway, Iceland was settled. King Haraldr had skalds with him, and people still know all their poems as well as poems about all the kings who have since ruled over Norway. We take almost all our examples from what is reported in these poems, which were recited before the rulers themselves or their sons. We consider everything that is told in these poems about their travels or their battles to be true. It is the convention of skalds to praise most the man who is present; nobody would dare to report, in front of him, deeds which he and everybody listening knew to be lies and invention. Then it would be scorn instead of praise.)

Snorri, who is generally considered to be the author of the Prologue, considers skaldic poems as authoritative sources because they were composed in the praised king's presence or ambit. As well, the poems were public documents and thus able to be tested by their audience.²¹ Snorri's argument presupposes that skaldic poems were not only interpreted as formal signs but that the audience also understood the content. But although Snorri refers to the public performance of the poems he does not tell us anything about the audience's reactions. On the other hand he implies that the poems were transmitted orally and that oral transmission of skaldic poems was considered reliable.²²

Snorri's *Heimskringla* contains stanzas by more than seventy skalds. From his quotations it becomes clear that although he considered skaldic poets to be authorities, he did not think of them as individual personalities who were performing their poems in front of an audience. In his Prologue Snorri emphasizes the fact that skaldic stanzas were orally transmitted but he then treats them in the same way as written sources. For Snorri, as well as for other authors of kings' sagas, skaldic poetry was a historiographic source, available as written text, to be interpreted according to the hermeneutic conventions taught in the *trivium*.²³

²⁰ *Heimskringla*, I, 5.

²¹ Both the Norwegian historiographer Theodoricus and the Danish historiographer Saxo Grammaticus refer to Icelandic sources. But in both cases the focus is less on the reliability of the skaldic poems than on the fact that there are Icelandic witnesses for events of Norwegian and Danish history.

²² It is an interesting question whether or not Snorri refers to classic rhetorical tradition when he points to the difference between real praise and mockery caused by exaggeration: Isidore of Seville warns of exaggerated king's praise in his *Etymologiae*. *Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologia-rum sive originum Libri XX*, ed. by W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), VI, ch. 7.

²³ The term 'hermeneutics' is used in a modern sense here, as for instance Hans-Georg Gadamer uses it. It is not used in the medieval sense of the fourfold interpretation of the Holy Writs.

But if we conclude that Snorri and his contemporaries regarded skaldic stanzas as written authorities — on the same hermeneutic level as classical texts — then our idea of the performance of skaldic stanzas has to be altered. It can be assumed that Icelandic family sagas were performed orally, either by a story-teller or by somebody who read out a written text. Therefore the audience got a scenic impression and understood the *lausavísur* as part of the characters' speech and thus also as part of the plot. In the kings' sagas, however, skaldic stanzas are part of the narrator's tale and therefore not part of the plot. Nevertheless in both cases the listening audience had to discern their function within their narrative context. With respect to the kings' sagas the audience had to realize that the stanzas were thought of as references to historical truth. But in order to acknowledge this function it was not necessary for the audience to decode all the details of the stanza's content. As in the Icelandic family sagas, it was most important to interpret stanzas as narrative signs: in the case of kings' sagas, as signs of the narrator's reliability. In this respect skaldic stanzas can be compared to quotations in scholarly articles: they are mainly meant as evidence for propositions. Only on a secondary level does the content of a quotation become important. In a similar way, both for medieval authors and for their audiences, skaldic poetry within a narrative context had a certain function. With respect to Snorri's presupposition in his Prologue to *Heimskringla*, this function was that a skaldic poem represented a positive statement referring to historic events. The nature of these events could be deduced from specific keywords in the stanzas, as for instance names of places or persons, stereotyped kennings for rulers, battles, weapons, etc. It was only of secondary importance, however, whether the audience was able to decipher all the details of a stanza. Therefore Snorri or other medieval authors can be reliable historiographers, even if they 'misunderstood' (in our modern sense) skaldic stanzas.²⁴

On the other hand the modern scholarly concern with hermeneutic details in skaldic poetry is due to Snorri himself. Without the background information supplied in *Snorra Edda* it would be very difficult to understand the skaldic kennings. At the beginning of *Skáldskaparmál* — that is, the part of his *Edda* which deals with the kennings — Snorri expresses the didactic intention of his work:

En þetta er nú at segja vngvym skaldvym, þeim er gírnaz at nema mal skaldskapar ok heyia ser orþfiolþa með fornvm heitvm eþa gírnaz þeir at kvNa skilia þat, er hvlit er qveþit, þa skili hann þesa bok til friþleiks ok skemtvmnar, en ecki er at gleyma eþa osaNá sva þesar frasagnir, at taka or skaldskapinvm fornar kenningar, þær er hævtskald hafa ser lika latit,

²⁴ See Roberta Frank, 'Skaldic Poetry', in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joseph Strayer and others, 13 vols (New York: Scribner 1982–89), XI (1988), 316–23 (p. 322).

en eigi skvlo kristnir menn trýa aheipin goð ok eigin asaNyndi þesa sagna aNan veg en sva sem her finz ivphafi bokar.²⁵

(But now this has to be told to young skalds, who are eager to learn the language of poetry and to acquire a vocabulary of traditional expressions, or who are eager to understand what is said in a disguised way; they should understand this book as entertainment and instruction. These tales should not be forgotten or proved to be untrue so that traditional kennings, which classical skalds liked to use, are taken out of poetry. But Christian people must not believe in heathen gods and the truth of these tales in any other way than has been set out at the beginning of this book.)

In this passage Snorri seems to have in mind the production of skaldic poetry. But a closer look at *Skáldskaparmál* reveals that according to the conventions of the discipline of medieval grammar he is more concerned with the comprehension of kennings and skaldic poetry than with actual textual production. For every type of kenning in his list, he quotes examples from the *höfuðskáld* (classical authors; here referring to the medieval Norwegian and Icelandic skalds), but he does not produce new kennings using the patterns he himself explains.

Nv skal lata heyra dæmin, hvernig hævðskaldin hafa latit ser lika at yrkia eptir þesvm heitvm ok keNingvm, sva sem segir ArnoR iarlaskald, at Oþinn heiti Alfǫðr: [...].²⁶

(Now we want to let you hear examples, which the classical skalds liked to use in composing poetry, using kennings and heiti, as for instance Arnór Jarlaskáld, who says that Óðinn is called Alfǫðr [...].)

Nor does Snorri call upon skalds to produce new kennings: in fact he is only interested in analysing and systematizing the kennings which have been produced so far. He is obviously more concerned about the skalds' language than about the act of composition, let alone about the possibilities of skaldic performance.²⁷ In his *Edda*, he deals with skaldic poetry as a form of lyric, which belongs to the past and can only be interpreted with the help of specific learned hermeneutic techniques. Although Snorri introduces his quotations traditionally with *verba dicendi*, he obviously does not mean to evoke the idea of an oral performance. Both the narrative context and the social context as frames for a possible performance are lacking in Snorri's text. He does not regard the stanzas as part of oral communication, but

²⁵ Snorri Sturluson, *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1931), p. 87.

²⁶ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, p. 88.

²⁷ See also Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), p. 174.

rather integrates them into the written conception of his works. This holds true for stanzas as historical sources as well as for stanzas as examples for indigenous Icelandic literature. Snorri explains and systematizes the kennings according to the grammatical tradition, that is, according to the art of hermeneutics and commentary, which relates to the interpretation of written texts.

As has often been noted, there is a close relationship between *Snorra Edda* and the learned tradition of the *trivium*: *Snorra Edda* is preserved in the same manuscripts as the four *Grammatical Treatises*, which among other things also deal with different aspects of the Icelandic language. All these treatises have a common focus on textual analysis rather than on textual production. The affinity of *Snorra Edda* with classical grammatical literature becomes most obvious from the comparison with *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, which was written by Snorri's nephew Óláfr Þórðarson. Both authors derived many of their technical terms from learned Latin works. Nevertheless *Snorra Edda* still gives the impression of being a rather independent work which deals exclusively with indigenous poetry. Óláfr, however, who is also dealing with the analysis of poetry, follows his Latin model Priscian very closely.²⁸ After a general introduction to the different units of sounds, letters, syllables, and words, Óláfr outlines the use and classification of tropes. Like his uncle, he translates Latin technical terms into Icelandic, but he does not translate the Latin poetic examples, replacing them instead with examples from skaldic poetry. It is clearly his intention that his treatise provide access to the poetry, but as becomes clear from his discussion of the relationship between sounds and letters, this poetry is conceived of as written poetry.

A possible objection to this argument is that Snorri himself produced a poem on the basis of his theoretical knowledge. The last part of his *Edda*, *Háttatal*, is a praise poem for the Norwegian king Hákon and his jarl Skúli. In the 102 stanzas of the poem Snorri gives examples of possible variations within the skaldic metrical system.²⁹ But within the medieval school system it is almost impossible to draw a clear line between grammar as an art of textual commentary and analysis and

²⁸ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatiske afhandlingers prolog og to andre tillæg*, ed. by Björn Magnússon Ólsen, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 12 (Copenhagen: Knudtzon, 1884), pp. 1–119.

²⁹ In one respect *Háttatal* is quite similar to *The First Grammatical Treatise*: both texts try to give as complete a list of variants as possible. The *First Grammatical Treatise* lists all phonetic variants of the Icelandic language and also tries to represent them graphically. It is interesting, though, that this graphic system seems not to have had any consequences for general orthographic practice.

rhetoric as an art of textual production. Both textual analysis and commentary produce new texts and are thus themselves part of rhetoric.³⁰ On the other hand *Háttatal* is clearly a poem produced as a practical illustration of skaldic theory. Snorri seems never to have performed this poem in front of the king and his court, but probably sent it as written text to its addressees.³¹

As a skaldic poem never meant for oral performance, *Háttatal* represents the final stage of a development which had probably started some time before Snorri: the transformation of skaldic poetry into a purely literary form of poetry. In Snorri's times traditional skaldic poetry was conceived of as a written art. Composed in a language of distance, skaldic poetry, like other classical texts — whether in Latin or in the vernacular — had to be approached as a hermeneutic problem.

Since all skaldic poems and stanzas are only preserved in manuscripts from Snorri's times onwards, we can only speculate about the oral performance of the poems in pre-literary times. To begin with, skaldic poetry was probably mainly restricted to a social elite, whereas from at least the thirteenth century it was restricted to an intellectual elite, that is, a group of people who were trained in the liberal arts of grammar and rhetoric. For the wider audience in the thirteenth century and later, skaldic poetry only signified a specific literary function within a narrative context, and we do not know what kind of significance skaldic poetry had for a broader audience in pre-literary times. This literary signification could be decoded by the audience independently of any comprehension of the content. In the thirteenth century, and probably even earlier, skaldic poetry could only be thought of as written literature, as was the case with all literature composed in a language of distance. By that time the *höfuðskáld* had achieved the position of classical *auctores*, whose learned authority could not be doubted and whose texts required a hermeneutical and learned approach.

So whenever we are dealing with skaldic poetry we need to take our bearings from the learned grammatical tradition of the thirteenth century: on one hand, because we depend on Snorri, who provides us with an access to the kenning

³⁰ See Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

³¹ Anthony Faulkes says of *Háttatal* that it 'is thus an example of the modification of the skaldic tradition brought about by the increasing use of the written word for literature in Scandinavia: instead of being recited aloud from memory by the poet in person before the ruler and his court, Snorri's poem was (presumably) sent in manuscript form to its patrons to be read by them or to them by someone else. There is no record of its reception': Snorri Sturluson, *Edda: Háttatal*, ed. by Anthony Faulkes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. ix.

system, and on the other, because all poems and stanzas have come down to us filtered by their reception in the thirteenth century, when the oldest manuscripts containing skaldic poetry were written. At this time people were already conscious of the poems' language of distance and of the hermeneutic problems connected with these poems. The semiotic aspect, however, was only of secondary importance for Snorri as it is for modern scholars, but we have to keep in mind that this was the primary aspect in aural reception, be it in pre-literary times or during the Middle Ages when sagas and the stanzas quoted within them were still recited.

IV. Vernacular and Latin Theories of Language

POETRY, DWARFS, AND GODS: UNDERSTANDING *ALVÍSSMÁL*

John Lindow

Alvíssmál is a schizophrenic poem. As a myth, it is a strange encounter between Þórr and a dwarf, but ever since Hermann Güntert focused attention on the linguistic implications of different ‘languages’ for different groups,¹ the mythological frame was often ignored in favour of study of the words assigned to various mythological groups in the main section of the poem, often, as with Güntert, on an Indo-European or etymological basis.² More recent scholarship seems to have taken a less firm line,³ but the fullest account of the mythological context of the poem as a whole is that of Margaret Clunies Ross. In the first volume of *Prolonged Echoes*, she considers *Alvíssmál* in the context of the negative reciprocity she so convincingly places at the centre of the cosmic drama of Old

¹ Hermann Güntert, *Von der Sprache der Götter und Geister: Bedeutungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur homerischen und eddischen Göttersprache* (Halle: Niemeyer, 1921).

² For example, Calvert Watkins, ‘Language of Gods and Language of Men: Remarks on Some Indo-European Metalinguistic Traditions’, in *Myth and Law Among the Indo-Europeans*, ed. by Jaan Puhvel, Publications of the UCLA Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 1–17; Lennart Moberg, ‘The Language of *Alvíssmál*’, *Saga-Book*, 18 (1973), 299–323. For a research history, see Klaus von See, Beatrice La Farge, Eve Picard, and Katja Schulz, *Kommentar zu den Liedern der Edda*, vol. III: *Götterlieder (Völundarkviða, Alvíssmál, Baldrs draumar, Rígsþula, Hyndlolióð, Grottasǫngr)* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2000), pp. 267–74.

³ Heinz Klingenberg, ‘*Alvíssmál*: Das Lied vom überweisen Zwerg’, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, 48 (1967), 113–42; Paul Acker, ‘Dwarf-Lore in *Alvíssmál*’, in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, ed. by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. 213–27.

Norse mythology.⁴ The Æsir may take their women from within or from other groups, but no other group may be permitted to take women from among the Æsir. Were they to do so, the moral order would be overturned. Within this system, Þórr has special importance as a protector of the women of the Æsir. Not only does he keep order in so doing, he also avoids an implicit threat of becoming *ragr*, which would result from the disorder of a woman being taken from him.⁵ By this reckoning, the poem closest to *Alvíssmál* is *Þrymskviða*: in that poem Þórr keeps Freyja from falling into the hands of the giant Þrymr, and in *Alvíssmál* he keeps his daughter, presumably Þrúðr,⁶ from being married to and carried off by a dwarf. Þórr begins each poem at a disadvantage: the hammer is stolen, other gods arranged the marriage with the dwarf. Arguing out from Bragi's kenning for the giant Hrungrnir, 'thief of Þrúðr', Clunies Ross adds Hrungrnir to the context and postulates 'the following general structure for *Alvíssmál* and both Snorri's and Bragi's version of the Hrungrnir myth'.

Þórr is away from Ásgarðr when, because of their vulnerability in their protector's absence, the gods allow an otherworld predator into their hall. He takes advantage of this situation to abduct or threaten to abduct one or more of the gods' women, in all cases including either Þórr's daughter (*Alvíssmál*, Bragi), or his wife (Snorri). Þórr returns to Ásgarðr when this dangerous situation threatens and defeats the predator either by the use of trickery alone or by trickery in combination with brute force.⁷

As I shall make clear in the last paragraphs of this paper, I agree that the Hrungrnir myth is an important part of the context of *Alvíssmál*, although I will present complementary grounds to support this statement. Here I note the utility of Clunies Ross's argument, using as she does the details of Snorri's version of the myth of Hrungrnir to surmise that it was the other gods who had promised Þrúðr to the dwarf and not merely a presumption of the dwarf himself, and that Þórr has just this moment returned home. In stanza 4 Þórr merely states that he was not at home when the girl was betrothed.

The other eddic poem with close affinities to *Alvíssmál*, according to Clunies Ross, is *Fjölsvinnsmál*, for both poems involve a suitor test. Each, she adds, involves

⁴ Margaret Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols, Viking Collection, 7, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1994–98), 1: *The Myths*.

⁵ See also Margaret Clunies Ross, 'Þórr's Honour', in *Studien zum Altgermanischen: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. by Heiko Uecker (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), pp. 48–76.

⁶ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 1, 111–15.

⁷ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 1, 115.

a suitor with a suitable name ('All-wise' and 'Much-wise'), but the knowledge implied by the name is irrelevant, for in each case the contest turns on wit, not wisdom.⁸ *Fjölsviðr*, I would add, is a giant. Thus *Alvíss* is in this context classed along with the giants. They are 'otherworld predators' in the apt phrase of Clunies Ross. In light of the application of the notion of negative reciprocity to Old Norse myths, even the Vanir are inappropriate suitors for the hands of the *Æsir*'s women, and in that sense it matters little whether *Alvíss* is a dwarf or a giant. This is a conclusion I will endorse in what follows.

Still, we may wonder why the poet chose a dwarf for the inappropriate suitor. In *Sqrla þáttr*, which everyone agrees is much later than the extant mythological eddic poems and is open to an explicitly Christian reading,⁹ Þórr does not keep dwarfs from sleeping with Freyja, and the disasters that follow do not seem to have to do with the system of negative reciprocity. In her consideration of 'Creation as Male Pseudo-Creation', Clunies Ross herself seems to put the dwarfs in a kind of middle position, aligned perhaps with the giants as the alien other,¹⁰ but in their craftsmanship and creative ability aligned with the gods (and with humans).¹¹

Dwarfs were apparently not part of folk belief in medieval Scandinavia, and their presence in eddic poems may have to do with *Märchen* patterns.¹² Perhaps, then, the idea of the *Märchen* sequence of the suitor questions suggested a dwarf to the poet. But there are, as I hope to show, other and perhaps better reasons. These have to do locally with the text and globally with the mythological system.

Dwarfs in Codex Regius

Alvíssmál, or the 'lay of All-wise', is the last of the eleven mythological poems in GKS 2365 4^o, usually known as Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda*. This famous Icelandic manuscript, the chief repository of eddic mythological verse, is from

⁸ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 113.

⁹ Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, 'Sqrla þáttr: The Literary Adaptation of Myth and Legend', *Saga-Book*, 6 (2002), 38–66.

¹⁰ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 164: 'giants equally with some other beings represent what one can call the alien other'.

¹¹ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 165.

¹² Helmut de Boor, 'Der Zwerg in Skandinavien', in *Festschrift Eugen Mogk zum 70. Geburtstag 19. Juli 1924* (Halle: M. Niemeyer), pp. 15–29. On *Alvíssmál* specifically, see Friedrich von der Leyen, *Das Märchen in den Göttersagen der Edda* (Berlin: Reimer, 1899), pp. 49 and 82, n. 20.

around 1280. It is probably a copy of a manuscript from a decade or so earlier. Probably there was a collection of heroic poetry by early in the thirteenth century, and by 1220–30 a few mythological poems had been recorded, but it was the redactor of the predecessor of the Codex Regius or even perhaps of the Codex Regius itself who combined the eleven mythological poems with the more numerous heroic poems into a single entity.¹³ The redactor of the Codex Regius may have added poems or composed poems. This redactor seems to have worked with the plan of creating a unified book in which the heroic section emulated the preceding mythological section, both in content and in language.¹⁴ The existence of such a plan places the various poems and prose sections into direct and unambiguous intertextual relationships. A consideration of dwarfs within the codex as a whole will therefore begin to address the question ‘Why a dwarf?’.

Dwarfs enter the Codex Regius on the very first leaf in the manuscript, in stanza 9 of *Völuspá*. By this time the sons of Burr have raised up lands and created the cosmos (stanza 4), ordered the heavenly bodies to create time-reckoning (stanza 6), and created wealth and tools (stanza 7). As they enjoy gaming and savour their wealth, a new crisis erupts when three giantesses (‘þursa meyjar’) arrive from Jötunheimar (stanza 7). Once again, the gods take counsel; the formula of the opening lines repeats stanza 6 and is abbreviated in the manuscript.

9 Þá gengo regin öll á rǫcstóla,
ginnheilög goð, oc um þat gættuz,
hverr scyldi dverga dróttin scepia,
ór Brimis blóði oc ór Bláins leggiom.

10 Þar var Mótsognir mæztr um orðinn
dverga allra, enn Durinn annarr;
þeir manlícon mǫrg um goðo,
dvergar, ór iǫrðo, sem Durinn sagði.¹⁵

(Then all the powers went to the judgement seats,
The all-holy gods, and considered this:

¹³ Gustav Lindblad, *Studier i codex regius av äldre eddan*, Lundastudier i nordisk språkvetenskap, 10 (Lund: Gleerup, 1954); Lindblad, ‘Centrala eddaproblem i 1970-talets forskningsläge’, *Scripta Islandica*, 28 (1978), 3–26.

¹⁴ Heinz Klingenberg, *Edda – Sammlung und Dichtung*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, 3 (Basel: Kohlhammer, 1974).

¹⁵ *Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern*, vol. I: Text, ed. by Gustav Neckel, rev. by Hans Kuhn, 4th edn (Heidelberg: Winter, 1962), pp. 2–3.

Who should fashion a lord of the dwarfs,
From the blood of Brimir and the limbs of Bláinn.¹⁶

Mótsógnir had become the greatest there
Of all the dwarfs, and Durinn the second;
They made many a human form,
The dwarfs, out of the earth, as Durinn said.)

Given the sheer size of the catalogue of dwarfs introduced by stanza 10 and running through stanza 16, one may conclude either that the passage is interpolated or that it is hugely important, or perhaps both. In recent scholarship, Ursula Dronke dismisses the catalogue and reads the gods' creation of the dwarfs as the constitution of a tame group of goldsmiths,¹⁷ thereby dismissing the argument advanced by Gro Steinsland for the importance of the dwarfs here, as the creators of the human forms ('manlícon') of stanza 10.¹⁸ Whether the *manlícon* are the first humans, animated by the gods, as Steinsland has it, or a male-created order of craftsmen, as Clunies Ross argues,¹⁹ I accept their importance in the logic of the poem: the gods' response to the disruption accompanying the *pursa meýjar* and the demise of the Golden Age involves consideration of dwarfs and their creation of *manlícon*. The poet has referred to the gods with collectives like 'regin oll' ('all the powers') and 'ginnheilög goð' ('all-holy gods') (stanzas 6, 9) as well as Æsir (stanza 7) but has not named names, except for those identified in stanza 4 as having lifted up the cosmos: 'Burs synir' ('sons of Burr'), that is, Óðinn, Vili, and Vé. Given their creative role here and elsewhere, dwarfs are surely to be connected with these creator gods and especially with Óðinn. Indeed, I would read their presence towards the end of the poem, when they groan before stone doors (stanza 48),²⁰ as a parallel, within the narrative of the destruction of the cosmos, to their participation in its creation. Dwarfs are associated with creation and therefore with Óðinn.

¹⁶ Such is the translation (mine, as throughout) of the text in the Codex Regius. Variant readings make the passage difficult as a whole; see, for example, the reconstructed text and variant apparatus in *The Poetic Edda*, ed. by Ursula Dronke, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969–97), II: *Mythological Poems*, p. 9, and Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 165–68.

¹⁷ *Poetic Edda*, ed. by Dronke, II, 38.

¹⁸ Gro Steinsland, 'Antropogonimyten i *Völuspá*: En tekst- og tradisjonskritisk analyse', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 98 (1983), 80–107.

¹⁹ Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, I, 165–68.

²⁰ See most recently Valdimar Th. Hafstein, 'Groaning Dwarfs at Granite Doors: Fieldwork in *Völuspá*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 118 (2003), 29–45.

As creators the dwarfs participated in the creation of Óðinn's primary tool, the mead of poetry. Although their role in the story is absent from the Codex Regius, which recounts only Óðinn's final theft of the mead from Suttungr and Gunnlǫð (*Hávamál* 104–10), the kenning 'drink of the dwarfs' is sufficiently widespread to certify Snorri Sturluson's inclusion of their role in the long story he tells of the mead of poetry in *Skáldskaparmál* in his *Edda*. The course traced by the mead tells us something about the intermediate position of the dwarfs, between gods and giants. The mead originates when the Æsir join with the hierarchically lower Vanir and create Kvasir as a token of their truce. This incorporation of the two groups has greatest impact in the area of wisdom, for it creates not only Kvasir but also the head of Mímir, one of the sources of Óðinn's wisdom, especially apparently in times of crisis. The head is an external source of wisdom, however, and Óðinn's greatest uses of that power come from within, from the magic songs he learns and from his mastery of poetry, idealized through consumption of the mead. Kvasir is one being, not something that can be consumed and internalized. Only when the dwarfs Fjalarr and Gjalarr kill him and ferment his blood for future use is this more powerful wisdom tool created. Just as Burr's sons kill Ymir to make a cosmos, so Fjalarr and Gjalarr kill Kvasir to make a cosmic tool. When the dwarfs conceal the murder of Kvasir and concoct the lie that he choked on his own wisdom, they are also acting in a characteristically Odinic way.

In the logical mapping of the myth, the involvement of dwarfs at this point also takes the Æsir a step further away from their own group, a step beyond the Vanir. The giants will enter the picture next, thereby taking the mead as far as it can get from the Æsir and making it the legitimate target of an acquisition myth. It is worth noting that the dwarfs lose the mead as a result of their killing of giants, drowning Gillingr at sea and crushing his wife with a stone. The imagery here is of Þórr rather than Óðinn: Þórr who fished up the Midgard serpent, Þórr who battles giants armed with stones — and Þórr who dispatches both male and female giants.²¹ This is the one moment when dwarfs behave like Þórr, not like Óðinn, and because of this behaviour, the mead is alienated even farther from the Æsir and falls into the hands of the giants.

When Suttungr threatens to place the dwarfs on a tidal skerry, he turns the Þórr imagery against them. The mead passes into the realm of the giants, where it awaits Óðinn. When Óðinn returns with it, the mead has made a full circle, leaving the Æsir as a man and returning as a force much greater than a man. Its

²¹ John Lindow, 'Addressing Thor', *Scandinavian Studies*, 60 (1988), 119–36.

passage from mythological race to mythological race structurally locates the dwarfs, quite ambiguously, between gods and giants, and their behaviour in the myth allows contemplation of the roles of Óðinn and Þórr in the greater mythology. I repeat: for the most part they are like Óðinn, and that is creative and positive, but when they behave like Þórr a precious good is put in danger.

Óðinn mentions dwarfs in the ecstatic final sections of *Hávamál*. The first instance is in connection with his self-sacrifice on the tree (stanzas 138–45) and specifically seems to have to do with the knowledge of runes he has acquired (stanzas 142–44). The passage is mysterious, but it does seem likely that the punctuation used by some editors, with a comma separating 142 and 143, is logical.²²

[...] oc reist hroptr rǫgna,
143. Óðinn með ásom, enn fyr álfom Dáinn,
Dvalinn dvergom fyrir,
Ásviðr iǫtnom fyrir,
ec reist síalfr sumar.²³

([...] and the leader of the powers carved [them],
Óðinn among the Æsir, / and among the elves Dáinn,
Dvalinn for the dwarfs,
Ásviðr for the giants,
I myself carved some.)

Given that Hroptr is an Óðinn-name, 'Óðinn með ásom' appears to be in apposition to 'hroptr rǫgna', and the following expressions would then be metaphors for the head of the gods. The groups whose chiefs are mentioned — Æsir, elves, dwarfs, and giants — comprise a small catalogue of mythological races, parallel to what Þórr and Alviðr take up in *Alvíssmál*.²⁴ However we read this stanza, it associates Óðinn with dwarfs and leaves the status of the dwarfs ambiguous.

The fifteenth of the eighteen charms in the *ljóðatal*, the last section of *Hávamál*, reinforces the connection between Óðinn and dwarfs.

²² So for example Gustav Neckel, as early as the first edition of his *Edda* (*Edda: Die Lieder des Codex Regius nebst verwandten Denkmälern* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1914), pp. 39–40), and accepted by Hans Kuhn in his updated fourth edition of that work (1962); see above, note 15. The manuscript shows a full stop at the end of each stanza, and other editors, such as Sophus Bugge, *Sæmundar Edda hins fróða* (Christiana: Mallings, 1867), p. 61, simply follow the manuscript.

²³ *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 41.

²⁴ I am following the usual editorial readings here. The passage itself is far from clear: 'enn fyr álfom dvalinn dainn, oc dvergom fyr alsviðr iotnom fyr', with transposition signs over *dvalinn* and *dainn*. The comma, which shows quite clearly in facsimiles, remains unexplained.

160 Þat kann ec íþ fimmtánda, er gól Þjóðrörir,
 dvergr, fyr Dellings durum;
 afl gól hann ásom, enn álfom frama,
 hyggio Hroptatý.²⁵

(I know the fifteenth, which Þjóðrörir howled,
 the dwarf, before the doors of Dellings;
 he howled wealth for the Æsir, and success for the *álfar*,
hyggja for Hroptr.)

This passage too has its difficulties. I would simply point out that Óðinn has *hyggja* — understanding, or mental process, or thought — from this dwarf's verbalization. Here the dwarf's position is unambiguously good; everything he howls is favourable for the gods and elves. This charm must be important, since the following final three have to do with Óðinn's specialty, sex and seduction — the very tools he used to acquire the mead of poetry. Dwarfs are important to Óðinn.

From this point until *Alvíssmál*, dwarfs play no role in the Codex Regius. The logical connection between Óðinn and dwarfs suggested by *Völuspá* and *Hávamál* and the full story of the mead of poetry may, however, be identified in many other areas of the mythology as well.²⁶

Þjóðólfr *inn hvínverski* has a telling reference to dwarfs in what editors reconstruct as stanza 2 of his *Ynglingatal*.

En dagskjarr
 Durnis niðja
 salvǫrðuðr
 Sveigði vélti,
 þás í stein
 enn stórgeði
 Dusla konr
 ept dvergi hljóp,
 ok salr bjarr
 þeira Sǫkmímis
 jǫtunbyggðr
 við jǫfri gein.²⁷

²⁵ *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 44.

²⁶ For a broader consideration of dwarfs in Old Norse-Icelandic tradition and the possible relationship with *Alvíss*, see Acker, 'Dwarf-Lore'. In a recent article entitled 'The Hole: Problems in Medieval Dwarfology', *Arv*, 61 (2005), 53–76, Ármann Jakobsson surveys the materials and draws special attention to the 'vagueness of dwarfs, their [...] absence fraught with meaning' (p. 70).

²⁷ [Snorri Sturluson], *Heimskringla*, ed. by Bjarni Aðalbjarnarson, 3 vols, Íslensk fornrit, 26–28 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1941–51), I, 28.

(And the day-shy
Hall-warden
Of the kinsmen of Durnir (dwarf)
Tricked Sveigðir,
When the great-minded
Kinsman of Dusli (king)
Ran after the dwarf,
And the bright hall
Of Sökmímir and his men,
Built by giants,
Swallowed him.)

In and of itself, the verse joins dwarfs and giants, for dwarfs live in a hall built by giants. Snorri's story of the demise of Sveigðir, which cites the verse as verification, sets it in the prehistory of the Yngling kings, descended from Óðinn. Sveigðir has vowed to seek Óðinn in Goðheimr and on this expedition has come to eastern Sweden. Passing from the drinking hall to bed chamber after dark, Sveigðir and his men see a dwarf by the huge stone that has given the farm its name, at Steini. 'Dvergrinn stóð í durum ok kallaði á Sveigði, bað hann þar inn ganga, ef hann vildi Óðin hitta' ('the dwarf stood in the door and called to Sveigðir that he should enter there if he wished to meet Óðinn').²⁸

As the verse itself makes clear, this is a trick, and Snorri tells us that Sveigðir never came out again. Nevertheless, the episode is interesting in adding dwarfs to the repertory of methods Óðinn uses to kill human kings. The episode perfectly captures the ambiguous role of the dwarfs in Old Norse mythology: associated with Óðinn, creators of good things, dangerous and tricky, even living in quarters built by giants. Indeed, the ambiguity of the dwarfs to a certain extent parallels the ambiguity of Óðinn himself.

I have already mentioned *Sqrla þátrr* from *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol). In it Freyja is identified as Óðinn's concubine, and in return for a necklace she gives her body to four dwarfs who live in a rock near Óðinn's court. In *Gylfaginning*, Snorri says that after the wolf Fenrir broke the first two fetters with which the Æsir intended to bind him, Óðinn sent Skírnir down into Svartálfaheimr to some dwarfs to have a third made: Gleipnir, with which the wolf is in fact finally bound. Besides Óðinn, Loki deals on two important occasions with dwarfs, once in the myth of Sif's hair, once in the story of the wergild for Otr. Loki is of course Óðinn's blood brother. Thus when a dwarf turns up claiming Þórr's daughter, and calling himself All-wise, he is carrying not a little Odinic baggage.

²⁸ *Heimskringla*, I, 27.

Alvíss the Poet

In the Óðinn poems *Vafþrúðnismál* and *Grímnismál*, and in the section of *Hávamál* dealing with the acquisition of the mead of poetry, Óðinn travels to the hall of someone of another group (giants, humans) and acquires wisdom (made manifest in the mead) in a verbal exchange. In *Skírnismál* the divine servant Skírnir journeys to another world and returns with a precious object, a bride for Freyr. In *Hymiskviða*, Þórr travels to the world of the giants and returns with a precious object, a kettle in which to brew beer, and in *Þrymskviða* he journeys to the world of the giants and returns with a precious object, his hammer (as well as the safety of Freyja). In *Lokasenna* Þórr journeys to the hall of Ægir and puts an end to Loki's insulting of the gods. In *Hárbarðsljóð* Þórr is travelling, Óðinn is in disguise, and the verbal encounter serves to order them, Óðinn above Þórr, in verbal skills.²⁹

In the context of the manuscript, then, Alvíss the dwarf has usurped the narrative role of the travelling, questing deity, and that inversion could help account for the placing of the poem last among the mythological texts. Þórr's daughter stands in for the precious object sought after. The fact that it is a woman reinforces the Odinic aspect of the role of Alvíss; I am thinking here not only of Gunnlǫð but also of Gerðr, for whom Freyr conceives his passion after seeing her from Hliðskjálf, Óðinn's high seat. But the fact that the visitor seeks to remove a female *ásynja* from the circle of gods puts the dwarf in the role of a threat, like Hrungnir, as noted above, or the masterbuilder of Ásgarðr.³⁰

Although they created the mead of poetry, the dwarfs never use the powerful force they have created nor even seem to understand its worth. As with the forming of the human bodies (if Steinsland's hypothesis is correct), it is for Óðinn and the gods to animate the force, in the case of the mead by tearing it away from the giants through an act of sexual aggression. Having created and possessed the mead, then, dwarfs should have some familiarity as a group with poetry. The giants, who possessed the mead later, have more familiarity and also skilled poets such as Vafþrúðnir. The gods, who own the mead, and especially Óðinn, have the greatest familiarity and skill with poetry of all.

This leads me to an important point. Alvíss knows the nouns of the poetic language, but he does not really create verse. That is to say, he puts his answers in

²⁹ Carol J. Clover, 'Hárbarðsljóð as Generic Farce', *Scandinavian Studies*, 51 (1979), 124–45.

³⁰ Some earlier scholarship saw a close connection between *Alvíssmál* and the myth of the masterbuilder of Ásgarðr; see von See and others, *Kommentar*, pp. 269–70.

ljóðahátttr, but he does not tell a story or refer to the cosmic wisdom that is ordinarily the subject of eddic wisdom poems. I believe that this failure to produce or allude to narrative is captured in his name: Al-víss, not *Al-fróðr. I will venture a translation of the two names that may capture the distinction I am aiming at:

Alvíss: not 'All-wise' but 'Know-it-all'.³¹

*Alfróðr: 'Possessing extraordinary knowledge'.

As an aside to this onomastic discussion, I point out that *víss* as a reference to what one knows is not even found in skaldic poetry; in eddic poetry it refers to knowing how to do things, not to knowledge. The meaning 'certain' is the only one found in skaldic poetry.³²

From *fróðr* is derived the noun *fræði*. *Fræði* is knowledge of the origin, extent, and details of the space in which events play themselves out: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Europe, the Holy Land on the one hand, the mythological cosmos on the other. Óðinn and Vafþrúðnir, and the historians Ari Þorgilsson and Sæmundr Sigfússon, were all of them *fróðir* by virtue of their possession and control of knowledge.³³ They knew more than the technical data of vocabulary (or of fashioning humanoid forms out of wood or precious objects out of stone); they knew how things got to be the way they are, and why. In this context it is instructive to revisit *Völuspá* 48, where the dwarfs who groan before the stone doors are 'veggbergs vísir' ('knowledgeable about the rock wall'). To be sure, the alliteration here requires a word with initial *v*-, but a rock wall as object of knowledge captures nicely the relationship of the dwarfs to knowledge. They know the rock wall because they live there. Their knowledge is directly experiential, not the deep knowledge of wisdom. Like his fellow dwarfs, Alvíss knows the world in which he

³¹ *Snorra Edda* twice refers to the poem as *Alsvinnsmál*. In the context I would also render Al-sviðr as 'Know-it-all' and would point out that Finnur Jónsson glosses it with 'klog' ('clever'); Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquae linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931), pp. 553–54, s.v. *svinnr*.

³² Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 626–27, s.v. *víss*. The two meanings, 'wise' and 'certain', are etymologically distinct (Gothic *-weis*, West Germanic *wīs* vs. Gothic *wiss*, West Germanic *wis*): Jan de Vries, *Altnordisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (Leiden: Brill, 1962), pp. 668–69, s.v. *víss*.

³³ On *fræði*, see Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Saga and Society: An Introduction to Old Norse Literature*, trans. by John Tucker, *Studia Borealia / Nordic Studies*, 1 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1993), pp. 107–08; John Lindow, 'Íslendingabók and Myth', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69 (1997), 454–64.

lives, and he knows a great many synonyms, but he never hints at why a given word is used by one group or another, or how a word got its meaning. In that regard, his knowledge differs significantly from that of Óðinn or Vafþrúðnir. Alvíss is not a poet but a walking and talking lexicon. His stanzas comprise no more than a catalogue of synonyms, a *pula* or versified list, and it is elicited at that. To be sure, much is elicited in the other mythological poems, but what is elicited there is narrative, not single word responses. Here indeed is wit, not wisdom.

The Structure of Alvíssmál

Like most eddic wisdom poems, *Alvíssmál* comprises an exchange between two speakers. We may identify three sections: an introductory section of eight stanzas, the exchange proper, stanzas 9–34, and a concluding section of one stanza. In the introductory stanzas, four exchanges take place, each begun by Alvíss and finished by Þórr. The characters name themselves and the stage is set. In the exchange proper, Þórr speaks and Alvíss responds. In the concluding stanza, Þórr speaks, and there is no possibility of a response.

By speaking first in the opening section, Alvíss emulates Óðinn in *Vafþrúðnismál*. Þórr's response (stanza 2) is significant in two respects. First, his question 'Hvat er þat fira' echoes his opening words in *Hárbarðsljóð*, to Óðinn: 'Hverr er sá sveinn sveina' ('What lad of lads is that?') and hence reinforces the Odinic connection. Second, his words 'þursa líki | þicci mér á þér vera' ('the likeness of an ogre seems to me to be on you'; *Alvíssmál* 2) bring out specifically the question whether dwarfs are to be classified with the giants. Like Óðinn in *Hárbarðsljóð*, Alvíss echoes Þórr's words. Óðinn asks Þórr 'hverr er sá karl karla, er kallar um váginn?' ('Who is that old man of old men, who calls across the sound?'; *Hárbarðsljóð* 2), and Alvíss asks Þórr 'Hvat er þat recca, | er í ráðom telz | flióðs ins fagrglóa?' ('What man is that, who claims to have authority over the beautiful woman?'; *Alvíssmál* 5). When Þórr names himself in both poems, he includes the information that he is Óðinn's son (*Hárbarðsljóð* 9, *Alvíssmál* 6). In the imagined world of the mythology, as in the real world of Icelanders and Norwegians in the Middle Ages, family ties were of course important parts of one's identity, and to indicate patrimony was presumably usual, but even so, the verbal echoes serve to draw the two poems together, *Hárbarðsljóð* and *Alvíssmál*.

The exchange section is of course the heart of the poem. Þórr puts thirteen question about vocabulary, an unusual number, even given Heinz Klingenberg's cogent arguments for thirteen as a magic number and for a missing fourteenth

category, day — that is, the daylight which will be fatal to the dwarf.³⁴ As Klingenberg shows, the categories are linked and hardly random, and the final topic, beer, obviously resonates to the general structure of the contest of wisdom. I find it likely that the poet ordered Þórr's questions, or rather the topics for which he requests vocabulary, in a way that is cosmically significant. The first two categories, *jörð* ('earth') and *himinn* ('sky'), comprise the cosmos and are the first things created within it. In *Vafþrúðnismál* Óðinn's first question to the giant asks precisely about them: 'hvaðan jörð um kom | eða uphiminn' ('whence came earth and sky'; *Vafþrúðnismál* 20). The next two categories Þórr asks about, *máni* ('moon') and *sól* ('sun'), also follow *Vafþrúðnismál*, where they comprise Óðinn's second question: 'hvaðan máni um kom [...] eða sól íþ sama' ('whence came the moon and the sun'; *Vafþrúðnismál* 22). The effect of this obvious echo of *Vafþrúðnismál*, just nine leaves forward in the manuscript, is to place Þórr unambiguously in the role of Óðinn the *áss* and Alviðs equally unambiguously in the role of the doomed Otherworld being.

The import of the following categories for which Þórr demands the vocabulary is less clear. Following the notion of linked pairs, *ský* ('clouds') and *vindr* ('wind') go together. I would argue that they represent the extent of the cosmos, the clouds inaccessibly high above and the wind coming, according to *Vafþrúðnismál* 36, from under the wings of the giant eagle Hræsvelgr at the end of the sky. If one wishes, one may see here a glimmering of the later structuralist parsings of mythic space into vertical and horizontal axes.³⁵ *Logn* ('calm'; stanzas 21–22) and *marr* ('sea'; stanzas 23–24) comprise the next two categories. They pair as opposites if one takes *marr* to be the rough open sea, as may be suggested by the poetic expressions *vátr marr* ('wet sea') and *kaldr marr* ('cold sea'), wet and cold when waves splash up above the ship's side. The poet Egill Skallagrímsson uses the word *marr* in *Sonatorrek* ('Mik hefr marr miklu ræntan'; 'the sea has robbed me greatly';

³⁴ Klingenberg, 'Alvíssmál'.

³⁵ Eleazar Meletinskij, 'Scandinavian Mythology as a System', *Journal of Symbolic Anthropology*, 1 (1973), 43–58, 2 (1974), 57–78; Kirsten Hastrup, *Culture and History in Medieval Iceland: An Anthropological Analysis of Structure and Change* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp. 50–69; Jens Peter Schjødt, 'Horizontale und vertikale Achsen in der vorchristlichen skandinavischen Kosmologie', in *Old Norse and Finnish Religions and Cultic Place Names: Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on Encounters between Religions in Old Nordic Times and on Cultic Place-Names Held at Åbo, Finland, on the 19th–21st of August 1987*, ed. by Tore Ahlbäck (Åbo/Turku: Donner Institute for Research in Religious and Cultural History, 1990), pp. 35–57; but cf. Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, 1, 50–56.

Sonatorrek 10) for the rough seas on Borgarfjörður that took the life of Bǫðvarr, his son, caused according to the saga when a gale met the water coursing out of Hvítá.³⁶ The relatively protected and small body of water grew fatally rough, and Egill called it a *marr*. *Logn* of course would be its exact opposite, what one might wish for if rowing near the mouth of Hvítá or any other glacially fed Icelandic river.

The word *marr* may have other connotations within the Codex Regius. When the world comes to an end, *Völuspá* 57 states famously that the sun turns black, the stars turn from the sky, and the earth sinks into the sea: 'sigr fold í mar'. Thus Þórr may be alluding here to the ultimate topic of wisdom, Ragnarök.³⁷

The next two categories, *eldr* ('fire') and *viðr* ('wood'), clearly are linked in the natural world. But in the context of cosmic wisdom, whether or not *marr* suggests Ragnarök, fire is the conflagration that destroys the world at Ragnarök, the bane of the switch (*Völuspá* 52), the high heat that plays at heaven itself (*Völuspá* 57). And in a cosmic context *viðr* suggests not only the mighty stands of trees consumed by the world-ending fire, but also and especially the symbol of them all, Yggdrasill, the world tree, which joins all the worlds and stands at the cosmic centre.

According to this reading, Þórr's categories are cosmogonic (earth, sky, sun, moon), cosmological (clouds, wind, calm, sea), and eschatological (fire, wood, and perhaps sea doing double duty). *Logn* ('calm') occupies the exact midpoint of the entire sequence of thirteen categories and may also suggest the calm before the storm of Ragnarök.

Having run through cosmogony, cosmology, and eschatology, Þórr may now revert to the frame,³⁸ and this he does with the next category, *nótt* ('night'). There is indeed also some continuation of the eschatological theme, since the earth had to have been plunged into eternal night when the sun turned black and the stars turned from the sky. Now, the origin of night and day are legitimate concerns of wisdom poetry. Óðinn charges Vafþrúðnir with explaining their origin just after asking about the origin of the cosmos itself (*Vafþrúðnismál* 22–23), and according to *Völuspá* 5 the Æsir gave order to the heavenly bodies so as to enable time-reckoning, the times of the day and the seasons. But *Vafþrúðnismál* 22–23 have

³⁶ *Egils saga*, ch. 78. *Egils saga Skalla-Grímssonar*, ed. by Sigurður Nordal, Íslenzk fornrit, 2 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka fornritafélag, 1933), pp. 242–56.

³⁷ I justify this locution on the fact that the subject of Óðinn's final questions to Vafþrúðnir in *Vafþrúðnismál* 44–53 all concern Ragnarök. Stanza 54 is the neck-riddle, forever unknowable, about what Óðinn said to his dead son Baldr when Baldr was on his funeral pyre.

³⁸ Klingenberg, 'Alvissmál'.

both night and day, and day is indeed the missing category.³⁹ Alvíss cannot see this absence, and he is doomed.

The poem could have ended here, but there are two more categories, *sáð* ('grain, seed') and *öl* ('beer'). In the natural world one makes beer from grain, but in cosmic wisdom beer always stands in for the mead of poetry. So, too, could *sáð*. The tenth-century poet Eilífr Goðrúnarson used the kenning 'sáð Sónar' ('seed of Són') for poetry in a stanza quoted by Snorri that is assigned by scholars to an otherwise lost and unknown poem to Hákon jarl from c. 990.⁴⁰ This final category should be viewed, in my opinion, not just as the conventional ending of a contest of wisdom, but also in light of the role the dwarfs played in the myth of the mead of poetry. As Alvíss pedantically lists synonyms for beer, with no apparent regard for its metaphorical meaning as poetry and its cosmic significance, he is undone by the sun.

Last Words

The last words of Alvíss the dwarf, then, come in response to Þórr's question about the name of beer in the various worlds.⁴¹ After surveying the terminology for beer among humans, the Æsir, the Vanir, the *jǫtnar*, and the dead (those in Hel), Alvíss speaks his final sentence: 'kalla sumbl Suttungs synir' ('the sons of Suttungr call it a party'; *Alvíssmál* 34). Now *sumbl* is a legitimate beer word, and 'sons of Suttungr' provides alliteration, but Alvíss has already given the word used by the *jǫtnar*: *brennaloegr* ('clear brew'). Are the sons of Suttungr different from the other *jǫtnar*, a special group? If so, their special nature would derive from their having had in their care the mead of poetry. In any case, there is more than a little irony in the dwarf naming with his last breath the very giant to whom his fellow dwarfs had surrendered the mead in the first place, and from whom Óðinn stole it.

Þórr has the last word in the poem.

³⁹ Klingenberg, 'Alvíssmál'.

⁴⁰ *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, A1–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), B1–II (Rettet tekst), ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15), A1, 148, B1, 139.

⁴¹ This section has benefited from comments by Carol Clover and Merrill Kaplan made during the discussion following my presentation of a version of this paper in the regular lecture series of the Medieval Studies Committee at the University of California, Berkeley, on 3 February 2006.

Í eino briosti ec sác aldregi
 fleiri forna stafi;
 miclom tálom ec qveð tældan þic:
 uppi ertu, dvergr, um dagaðr,
 nú scínn sól í sali.

(In one breast I never saw
 More ancient bits of knowledge;
 With great deceits I declare you deceived:
 You are 'dayed up',⁴² dwarf,
 Now the sun shines into the halls.)

Whether he is gloating or not in the first half of the stanza, in the second half Þórr shows again what is at stake: poetry as poetry, not as a list. He adds another *ljóðaháttir* long line to the second half and thereby switches into *galdralag*. *Galdralag* is associated with charms and would therefore be eminently appropriate for the moment when the dwarf is somewhat magically destroyed. Against the dwarf's rote catalogue, then, the god produces a metric variation at precisely the right moment.

Alvíssmál is, as noted, the final mythological poem in the Codex Regius. The editors of the Frankfurt *Eddakommentar* address this placement and suggest two reasons for it.⁴³ The first is that it is a wisdom poem without Óðinn; the Óðinn wisdom poems come at the beginning of the manuscript. The second is that by moving to a discussion of language, it takes a position parallel to that of *Skáldskaparmál*, following the more directly mythological *Gylfaginning*, in the manuscripts of *Snorra Edda*. Both explanations are conceivably valid. Perhaps there are others as well.

The very large capital A that begins *Helgakviða Hundingsbana I* is only one sign of the break between the preceding mythological poetry and the following heroic poetry. This initial, as far as I can see from facsimile editions the largest in the manuscript, begins the line 'Ár var alda' ('It was a long time ago'). At this point, readers have moved away from the world of gods into the world of humans. Þórr therefore gets the last word not only in his dialogue with Alvið, but also in the mythological section of the manuscript as a whole. When the sun shines in and petrifies the dwarf, it also petrifies the mythological section, fixes it, and

⁴² Beatrice La Farge and John Tucker, *Glossary to the Poetic Edda: Based on Hans Kuhn's Kurzes Wörterbuch*, Skandinavistische Arbeiten, 15 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1992), p. 35, s.v. *daga*, define *daga uppi* according to the context: 'to catch unawares above ground at daybreak and turn to stone'. See Acker, 'Dwarf-Lore', for thoughts on this motif.

⁴³ Von See and others, *Kommentar*, p. 287.

allows distance from it. Icelanders knew the mythology, but they also knew that it belonged to a distant past, one that had no more direct relevance to them than the stones and rocks of their landscape.

A celebrated episode in *Óláfs saga helga* is instructive here. When Óláfr comes to the reluctant pagans in Gudbrandsdal, they bring a mighty statue of Þórr and ask Óláfr where his god might be. Óláfr has previously readied Kolbeinn *sterki* to wait for a moment to strike the idol if the pagans should look away from it. At just the right moment, Óláfr delivers his speech, addressed first to Dala-Guðbrandr, then to all the pagans.

‘Mart hefir þú mælt í morgun til vár. Lætr þú kynliga yfir því, er þú mátt ekki sjá guð várn, en vér vættum, at hann mun koma brátt til vár. Þú ognar oss guði þínu, er blint er ok dauft ok má hvártki bjarga sér né ǫðrum ok kǫmsk engan veg ór stað, nema borinn sé, ok vænti ek nú, at honum sé skammt til ills. Ok lítið þér nú til ok séð í austr, þar ferr nú guð várr með ljósi miklu.’ Þá rann upp sól, ok litu bændr allir til sólarinnar. En í því bili laust Kolbeinn svá guð þeira, svá at brast allt í sundr, ok hljópu þar út mýss, svá stórar sem kettir væri, ok eðlur ok ormar.⁴⁴

(‘Much have you said to us this morning. You say it is strange that you cannot see our god, but we expect that he will soon come to us. You frighten us with your god, who is deaf and blind and cannot protect himself nor others and cannot move unless he is carried; and I expect that he will soon suffer ill. And gaze now and look to the east, there comes our god with a great light.’ Then it was sunrise, and the yeomen all looked toward the sun. And at that moment Kolbeinn struck the idol, so that it all broke apart, and mice ran out as big as cats, and toads and snakes.)

In this high medieval imagining of the missionary activity of St Óláfr, the idol of Þórr is ‘uppi dagaðr’ (‘dayed up’). Paganism cannot stand the light, an enduring symbol of God and Christ throughout the Middle Ages. The sun turns the dwarf to stone, and it turns the pagan myths into historical artefacts of the distant past.⁴⁵

The mythological section of the Codex Regius of the *Poetic Edda* is bookended by these sentences: ‘Hlióðs bið ec allar | helgar kindir’ (‘I ask a hearing | of the holy races’; *Völuspá* 1), spoken by a seeress conjured up by Óðinn so as to acquire wisdom, and ‘Uppi ertu, dvergr, um dagaðr, | nú scínn sól í sali’, spoken by Þórr putting down a dwarf whose wisdom was superfluous. Óðinn initiates the mythological section, and Þórr ends it. Dwarfs play important roles in the beginning and end: they are associated with and help Óðinn in *Völuspá* and briefly in *Hávamál*, and

⁴⁴ *Heimskringla*, II, 189.

⁴⁵ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Saga and Society*, pp. 150–55; Clunies Ross, *Prolonged Echoes*, vol. II: *The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, pp. 81–84.

the wisest of them (presumably) opposes Þórr at the end. I submit that two interrelated factors led to the choice of a dwarf as the ‘otherworld predator’.

The first is an issue that has come up throughout this paper, the status of dwarfs; are they with or against the gods? Their creative powers and Odinic attachments might suggest classification with the gods, and the marriage of a dwarf to a female *ásynja* would verify such a classification. It falls to Þórr to make it clear that dwarfs are not gods, whatever their association with Óðinn, and it fell to the poet of *Alvíssmál* to show that the all-wise dwarf was no poet, however great his knowledge of vocabulary. The question of the status of dwarfs is hardly idle; another such being is Loki, again associated with Óðinn and again of unclear, dangerous, and ultimately deadly inimical status towards the gods. Nor is the poetic skill of dwarfs an idle issue. Poetry is a powerful, agonistic tool. The poet and/or god Bragi himself once had a poetic exchange with a troll woman, and this exchange was almost certainly significant.⁴⁶ *Alvíssmál* shows that the dwarfs’ access to poetry, like that of the giants and trolls, is dangerous but not fatal.

The second factor involved with the dwarf as ‘otherworld predator’ grows out of the first. It has to do with the relationship between Óðinn, whose wisdom poetry clusters towards the beginning of the manuscript, and Þórr, whose wisdom poem ends the mythological section. Indeed, one might argue that this section of the Codex Regius has only Óðinn poems and Þórr poems, with *Hárbarðsljóð*, which symmetrically has five mythological poems before it and five after, as the transition. By this reading, *Skírnismál* would be an Óðinn poem because it is about sex and the power of the spoken word, and *Völundarkviða* would be a Þórr poem because the protagonist is a smith. Such an argument — one on which I would hardly insist — serves to bring into focus the contrast between the two deities. The pivotal *Hárbarðsljóð* seems to order Óðinn above Þórr when it comes to poetry, but *Alvíssmál* to some extent restores Þórr’s claim in this area. More to the point is my first factor, the status of dwarfs. When Þórr outwits and causes the death of Alvíss, he solves a problem created by Óðinn. I am not arguing that it was Óðinn who promised Þórr’s daughter to the dwarfs. Instead, I am arguing on the basis of the entire manuscript that Óðinn’s apparent creation of the dwarfs and use of them to solve the problem of the *þursa meyjjar* raised the additional problem of their status and left the gods vulnerable to an invasion of the sort carried out by Alvíss.

⁴⁶ John Lindow, ‘Narrative Worlds, Human Environments, and Poets: The Case of Bragi’, in *Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes and Interactions*, ed. by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere, Väger till Midgård, 8 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press, 2006), pp. 21–25.

I return to Margaret Clunies Ross's reading of the general structure of the Hrungnir myth and *Alvíssmál*, quoted verbatim above. I would venture to amend it slightly and suggest that *Alvíssmál* follows the pattern I have outlined elsewhere for Snorri's version of the Hrungnir myth.⁴⁷ There Óðinn creates a problem, by bringing Hrungnir into Ásgarðr with a pledge of peace and allowing him to drink there. Þórr must solve that problem by facing and killing Hrungnir (the strongest of giants) in a duel. *Alvíssmál* is in dialogue with that myth in several ways. The giant's drinking plays with the idea of the poetic mead, but all it produces is dangerous boasts; the dwarf does not have the drink Óðinn demands in *Vafþrúðnismál* 8 and in the first of his riddles in the *Gestumablandagátur*⁴⁸ and is given, according to the prose header, before he begins his ecstatic wisdom performance in *Grímnismál*.⁴⁹ This drink seems to be a requirement for a wisdom performance and is therefore just one more instance of the dwarf's failed poetic performance. As a verbal duel, Þórr's exchange with the dwarf echoes his physical duel with Hrungnir, and there is trickery in both duels: in the Hrungnir myth when Þjálfi warns the giant that Þórr will attack from below, thereby causing the giant to misuse his shield, and in *Alvíssmál* in the very idea of the frame. Þórr is pinned under the heavy leg of Hrungnir and must be freed by his son, and the dwarf turns into a presumably heavy stone when Þórr frees his daughter from the threat of a disastrous marriage.

The mythology required both Óðinn and Þórr, and the myths were ways of comparing them and their attributes, abilities, and spheres of influence. Snorri, steeped in the older poetry, and the redactor of the Codex Regius, also obviously a person interested in poetry, ranked Óðinn first, but the myths themselves suggest a more complex relationship and often give Þórr the last word. According to the *Völuspá* poet (stanza 56), Þórr is the last god standing at Ragnarök, after Óðinn and Freyr fall. When Snorri reverses that order in his paraphrase of the last stanzas of the poem,⁵⁰ we see clearly the balance between the two main deities.

⁴⁷ John Lindow, 'Thor's Battle with Hrungnir', *alvíssmál*, 6 (1996), 3–18.

⁴⁸ *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, ed. by Christopher Tolkien (London: Nelson, 1960), pp. 32–33.

⁴⁹ *Edda*, ed. by Neckel and Kuhn, p. 57.

⁵⁰ *Edda Snorra Sturlusonar*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1931), pp. 72–73. Snorri lets his interest in Loki show through when he names as the final fight the one between Loki and Heimdallr.

THE NOTION OF EFFEMINATE LANGUAGE IN OLD NORSE LITERATURE

Mats Malm

One crucial condition for understanding Old Norse culture is that the influence of Latin thought, classical and medieval, be identified. Although this is a truism, the degree to which it is true depends on what kind of material is at hand. As Margaret Clunies Ross demonstrated in *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, the influence of Latin thought is especially important to appreciate *Snorra Edda* properly.¹ Latin philosophy and rhetorical and poetic theory exerted a sort of influence that might be labelled 'learned' and viewed in terms of the history of ideas. In this essay, I would like to focus on a strand of influence from the rhetorical tradition that belongs instead to the history of mentalities. It concerns a habit of attributing a body and even morals to language, a habit which is sometimes explicated in theoretical treatises, but more often seems to be so self-evident that it needs no explication. It is therefore difficult to identify but is, in some instances, representative of very basic notions of gender and virtue which are not exclusive to the learned tradition but are, rather, a question of mentality.

The conception of virtue and honour is obviously a matter of gender. The word 'virtue' itself demonstrates how intimately virtue (*virtus*) has been associated with manliness, from *vir*. The Latin words speak what seems to be a fairly general truth about how societies have handled the distribution of power. In any discussion on this topic, a central issue must be the definition of 'manliness'. At least in early societies, its opposite is not 'womanliness' but rather 'unmanliness'.

¹ Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987).

As Carol Clover clarified in 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe', the distinction between manliness and unmanliness in early Nordic societies was like a continuum with prowess at the top and weakness at the bottom. Both men and women could move along the scale, according to certain premises. The top was connected with the male and the bottom with the female, but to a great extent these are social constructions which are not identical to physical sex. The words Clover uses to present the opposites are *hvatr* and *blauðr*: 'brisk', 'vigorous' and 'soft', 'weak'.² Metaphorically they mean 'masculine' and 'feminine', or rather, 'unmanly'. Thus, a man could in effect be emasculated, become *blauðr*, and sink on the scale, while a woman could achieve a degree of manliness and thus rise on the scale. An essential cultural trait based on this is of course *nið*, which Preben Meulengracht Sørensen discussed in *The Unmanly Man*.³ The profound distinction between manliness and unmanliness in Old Norse society and individuality was also treated by Meulengracht Sørensen in *Fortelling og ære*, where he showed how gender was inscribed in the social order and formed the templates according to which an individual was able to behave.⁴

The paradigm is highly illuminating for Old Norse society with its strict codes of honour, but is not exclusive to it. A seminal precursor to Clover's work was Thomas Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud*, which demonstrates the extent of the 'one-sex model' in European history.⁵ The one-sex model is a mode of thought, Laqueur maintained, which implies that femininity is merely lack of masculinity and that woman is thus to be understood as a lesser man. This notion, which defines sex according to social functions, is in effect a notion of gender rather than of sex. According to Laqueur it prevailed in Western culture until the eighteenth century, when scientific and social development gradually caused it to be replaced by the notion of two entirely different sexes. Instead of judging men and women on the same vertical scale of manliness, it was now possible to view the sexes as different categories. Laqueur largely follows the

² Carol Clover, 'Regardless of Sex: Men, Women, and Power in Early Northern Europe', *Speculum*, 68 (1993), 363–87 (pp. 363–64).

³ Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *The Unmanly Man: Concepts of Sexual Defamation in Early Northern Society*, trans. by Joan Turville-Petre, Viking Collection, 1 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1983).

⁴ Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortelling og ære: Studier i Islendingesagaerne* (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1993), esp. pp. 212–15.

⁵ Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990).

learned European tradition — since that is where the ideas are made explicit — but nevertheless pins down a very general tendency. The universality of this paradigm was substantially corroborated when Clover demonstrated its validity for Old Icelandic society in her analysis.

Precisely to what extent Laqueur's model is valid is debatable, but it certainly captures an essential mode of thought in Western culture. And medieval Icelandic culture seems to have indulged in such thinking more than any other. What I would like to add is that in antiquity the conception of virtue and gender had its precise parallel in language. Language was judged in terms of virtue, honour, and gender, to the effect that 'unmanly' language was described as immoral and voluptuous. Thus, if the view of sex and gender that Laqueur and Clover have described is in its essentials common to European and Old Norse culture, it may be expected that there was also a corresponding common view of language. Therefore, after outlining the classical notion of effeminate and voluptuous language, I will test the evidence for such a notion in Old Norse.

The Classical Notion of Effeminate Language

Within the rhetorical tradition, the prevailing attitude towards the power of language is strongly positive. As one might expect: rhetoric is the theory of how to exploit the possibilities of language. However, what is not as obvious is that the notion of the power of language may also result in a fear of that power, of being subjected to it. This fear constitutes an undercurrent in rhetorical tradition, seemingly so natural to rhetorical thinking that it was part of public consciousness. According to this notion language has a body, and thus conventional virtue coincides with rhetorical virtue, conventional vice with rhetorical vice. Quintilian formulates it like this:

Corpora sana et integri sanguinis et exercitatione firmata ex isdem his speciem accipiunt ex quibus vires, namque et colorata et adstricta et lacertis expressa sunt: at eadem si quis vulsa atque fucata muliebriter comat, foedissima sint ipso formae labore. Et cultus concessus atque magnificus addit hominibus [...] auctoritatem: at muliebris et luxuriosus non corpus exornat, sed detegit mentem. Similiter illa translucida et versicolor quorundam elocutio res ipsas effeminat quae illo verborum habitu vestiuntur. Curam ergo verborum, rerum volo esse sollicitudinem. [...] Maiore animo adgredienda eloquentia est, quae si toto corpore valet, unguis polire et capillum reponere non existimabit ad curam suam pertinere.

(Healthy bodies, with sound blood and strengthened by exercise, acquire good looks by the same means as they acquire strength; they are tanned, slim, and muscular. On the other hand, if one feminizes them by plucking the hair and using cosmetics, the very

striving for beauty makes them disgusting. Again, decent and impressive apparel lends men authority [. . .], but a womanish and luxurious dress, instead of adorning the body, exposes the mind within. In the same way, the translucent and many-coloured style [*elocutio*] of some speakers emasculates subjects who are clothed in this kind of verbal dress. What I want is *care* for words, but *deep concern* for the subject. [. . .] Eloquence should be approached in a higher spirit; if her whole body is healthy, she will not think that polishing her nails or styling her hair has anything to do with her well-being.)⁶

Here not one, but two female bodies are attributed to language. *Elocutio*, the embellishing and seductive style, uses cosmetics and dissimulates. By her side is presented *Eloquentia*, that is, eloquence as a totality, including argument, topics, the just cause: she is pure and simple. The speaker himself is the ascetic athlete who disparages exaggerated *Elocutio* and chooses sound *Eloquentia*.

This iconographic description stems from the classical debate on Asianism versus Atticism. The Atticists were the harsh and philosophically disposed speakers who did not care much about making their discourse pleasant or appetizing. The Asians were criticized for being *only* interested in the pleasant and sensuous form, thereby obfuscating what content there might be underneath and setting a detrimental example. The debate was constantly present in Rome: Cicero was accused of being an Asian, and his natural defensive strategy was to accuse others of being Asians. Asianism thus indulges in *elocutio* and practically disregards content and thought, concentrating on pleasures and passions — according to the critics. This critique may be described as a linguistic manifestation of sexual anxiety, and its power should not be underestimated. Key words are *effeminatus*, *libido*, and *voluptas*. Effeminacy is here equivalent to voluptuousness and means indulging in debauchery — be it corporeal or linguistic. Voluptuousness is contagious: men risk being emasculated, made effeminate. This is why it is so important to protect schoolboys from intercourse with pernicious language, Quintilian stresses: ‘ne recenti huius lasciviae flosculis capti voluptate prava deleniantur, ut praedulce illud genus et puerilibus ingeniis hoc gratius quo propius est adamant’ (‘they must not fall for the prettiness of modern self-indulgence, and grow soft with its depraved pleasures, so as to fall in love with that luscious sweetness which is all the more attractive to boys because it is closer to their natural instincts’).⁷ Compared to the linguistic extravagances of Asianism, the plain but just Atticism will always be the right choice. Language has a body, and language has morals.

⁶ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, ed. and trans. by Donald A. Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 8.Pr.19–22.

⁷ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 2.5.22.

The conflict between Atticists and Asians may seem to be simply an illustration of two stylistic ideals, but it is more than that. The resistance towards Asianism stems from a deep fear of effeminate language: the speaker cannot be separated from what he says. Quintilian demonstrates every conceivable technique of delightful and seductive language, but at the same time he must safeguard himself from the suspicion of using voluptuous language. He must handle Plato's critique of rhetoric as flattery and short-sighted pleasure, and he must demonstrate that he is no advocate of immoral language. Rhetoric is a matter of power, and the speaker constantly risks being castrated by voluptuous language:

non alio medius fidius vitio docentium quam quo mancipiorum negotiatores formae puerorum virilitate excisa lenocinantur. Nam ut illi robur ac lacertos barbamque ante omnia et alia quae natura proprie maribus dedit parum existimant decora, quaeque fortia, si liceret, forent ut dura molliunt: ita nos habitum ipsum orationis virilem et illam vim stricte robusteque dicendi tenera quadam elocutionis cute operimus et, dum levia sint ac nitida, quantum valeant nihil interesse arbitramur. Sed mihi naturam intuenti nemo non vir spadone formosior erit.

(the teachers, I feel bound to say, have been guilty of the same offence as slave dealers who castrate boys to increase their attractions. As those dealers think there is no beauty in strength or in a muscular arm, and certainly not in a beard and the other natural endowments of the male, and so take what might, if left alone, have developed into sturdiness and soften its supposed hardness — so do we cover up the manly form of eloquence and the power of lean and vigorous speech with a delicate veneer of style, and think effectiveness of no importance, so long as everything is smooth and polished. I look rather at nature; any real man is more handsome to me than any eunuch.)⁸

The female body of language is a menace to men, threatening not only to feminize them but even to castrate them. Voluptuous language is powerful and threatening because it makes men, and thus society, soft, effeminate, and helpless or possibly harmful. Effeminate language obscures and inhibits the perception of reality. This notion is traceable through tradition and emerges in early modern societies, such as sixteenth-century France and seventeenth-century Sweden.⁹ Quintilian presents the most eloquent description of effeminate language, but the notion was widespread. There is no evidence that Quintilian was known in thirteenth-century Iceland, but as we know the rhetorical tradition was introduced in *The*

⁸ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 5.12.17–19.

⁹ For this, as well as broader discussions of the classical tradition, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein, *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989) and Mats Malm, *Det liderliga språket: Poetisk ambivalens i svensk barock* (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings bokförlag Symposion, 2004).

Third and *Fourth Grammatical Treatises*, and both Latin literacy and Christianity imply, at the very least, basic rhetorical training. As Clover described the Norse notion of gender with the key word *blauðr*, so in the classical concept of virtue and the classical concept of effeminate language man becomes *mollis* and *effeminatus*. If anything, Clover's investigation showed that the notion of a scale from masculine prowess down to effeminate weakness was even more appropriate for Old Norse society than for Western culture as a whole. Without claiming any identity between Asians and Æsir, I think there is reason to examine what traces of the notion of effeminate language are to be found in Old Norse literature.

Explicit Evidence

Explicit discussions of effeminate language were relatively rare even in antiquity (when they occur, they are often in iconographical form, portraying Asianism as an adorned harlot).¹⁰ Such instances are connected to discussions of the stylistic devices of *elocutio*, but in fact belong to a higher conceptual level: warnings against effeminate language concern rhetoric generally. In treatises from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages such as Donatus and Priscianus — the prime sources of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* — the level is lower: these concern the basics, from grammar to the stylistic devices of rhetoric.¹¹ That is, they aim at conveying a basic literary competence and do not discuss rhetoric in more general terms. *Inventio*, *dispositio*, *memoria*, and *actio* take a back seat to *elocutio*. Critical discussion of exaggerated language is not in the primary scope of such treatises, and thus one does not find warnings against effeminate language in them. Still, it is obvious from many instances that the notion of effeminate language was a living part of the rhetorical tradition, even if it is not always made explicit.

Consequently, explicit mention of effeminate language is hard to find in Old Norse literature. A related concept is the opposition of verbosity and wisdom, which is present in a quotation from Cato in *The First Grammatical Treatise* (twelfth century):

Contra verbosos noli contendere verbis.
Sermo datur cunctis animi sapientia paucis.

¹⁰ One particularly vivid description is presented by Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Dionysius, 'The Ancient Orators', in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus: The Critical Essays in Two Volumes*, ed. and trans. Stephen Usher (London: Heinemann; New York: MacMillan, 1974), 1, 5.

¹¹ Compare Karsten Friis-Jensen, 'Horace and the Early Writers of Arts of Poetry', in *Sprachtheorien in Spätantike und Mittelalter*, ed. by Sten Ebbesen (Tübingen: Narr, 1993), pp. 360–401.

Þat er sva að skilia: hirð eigi þu að þræta við málrof menn; málrof er gefit mörgum en spekin fám.

(Do not fight the loquacious with words.

Ability to speak is given to all, wisdom only to the few.

This means: do not bother to quarrel with loquacious people: the gift of speech is given to many, but wisdom only to few.)¹²

Verbosity obscures content, covers lack of content, or even obfuscates wisdom: this is a very common notion which is only the first stage of the notion of effeminate language. This notion has been the cause of traditional movements towards purified discourse throughout history, not least in the Christian tradition. However, even if the ideal of clarity is related to the notion of effeminate language, it is not proof of it.

In *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, there are no warnings against exaggerated ornament. It is not possible to determine whether there were any in its source, Donatus's *Ars maior*, since this treatise did not have a single fixed form. In some manuscripts of *Ars maior*, the figure *cacozelia* is treated.¹³ *Cacozelia* or *cacozelon* catches the essence of voluptuous language and is usually described as perverse affectation, turgid, extravagant, or luscious transgressions of good taste and judgement. An authority such as Quintilian speaks of obscurity and effeminacy, as well as false appearance of good in this figure.¹⁴ *Cacozelia* may have been mentioned in the manuscript or manuscripts of Donatus that were at hand in Iceland, but there is no evidence of it, and since it does not occur in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, there is no case to argue that the notion of voluptuous language reached Iceland this way.

As is well known, especially in the religious sphere but also in profane literature there has frequently been a movement towards *claritas*: pure and simple diction. This demand occurs throughout history and is evidenced in Iceland during the fourteenth century. It does imply that exaggerated adornment and too many stylistic devices obscure the content, or conceal the fact that there is no content

¹² Normalized from *Den første og anden grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda*, ed. by Verner Dahlerup and Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Møller & Thomsen, 1886), p. 34.

¹³ Louis Holtz, *Donat et la tradition de l'enseignement grammatical: Étude sur l'Arts Donati et sa diffusion (IV^e–IX^e siècle) et édition critique* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1981), p. 167, n. 16.

¹⁴ 'Cacozelon, id est mala adfectatio, per omne dicendi genus peccat; nam et tumida et pusilla et praedulcia et abundantia et arcessita et exultantia sub idem nomen cadunt' ('*Cacozelia*, that is to say perverse affectation, is a fault found in every type of style. The same name covers the turgid, the trivial, the luscious, the redundant, the far-fetched, and the extravagant'): Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 8.3.56.

beneath, although it is not entirely identical to the notion of effeminate language. Peter Foote has demonstrated the influence on Eysteinn Ásgrímsson's *Lilja* (1340–60) not only of Latin tradition generally but of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's *Poetria nova* (c. 1202) in particular.¹⁵ The parallels concern the description of various figures, but also *Lilja*'s programme of clarity: stanzas 97–98 reject the use of 'eddic' rules and *hulin fornyrði* ('recondite archaisms'):

Veri kátar nú virða sveitir;	varðar mest til allra orða,
vættig þess, í kvæðis hætti	undirstaðan sé réttlig fundin
várkynni, þóat verka þenna	eigi glögg þóat eddu regla
vandag miðr, en þætti standa;	undan hljóti at vikja stundum.

(Now rejoice, hordes of men: I believe that you will overlook that I elaborate the metre of the poem less than may seem suitable. The most important thing in all speech is that the foundation is correct, even if the obscure rule of Edda must sometimes fall back.)

Sá, er oðinn skal vandan velja	vel því at hér má skýr orð skilja,
velr svá mǫrg í kvæði at selja	skili þjóðir minn ljósan vilja,
hulin fornyrðin, at trautt má telja,	tal óbreytiligt veitt af vilja,
tel ek þenna svá skilning dvelja;	vil ek at kvæðit heiti Lilja.

(He who attempts to compose an elaborate poem chooses to place so many obscure old words in the poem that they can hardly be counted. I say that he hinders understanding. Since my words here can be clearly understood, people may understand my clear intention. This straightforward and considered speech is a poem I would like to name *Lilja*.)¹⁶

Obviously, at the end of *Lilja*'s one hundred stanzas, the author wishes to contrast himself with other writers who use obscure, and more adorned, language. As the ideal of *claritas* and simplicity has been advocated throughout history and not least

¹⁵ Peter Foote, 'Latin Rhetoric and Icelandic Poetry: Some Contacts', in his *Aurvandilstá: Norse Studies*, ed. by Michael Barnes and others, Viking Collection, 2 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1984), pp. 249–70 (pp. 258–67).

¹⁶ *Den norsk-islandske skjaldedigtning*, AI–II (Tekst efter håndskrifterne), BI–II (Rettet tekst), ed. by Finnur Jónsson (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912–15), BII, 415–16. Foote shows how *Lilja*'s wording corresponds to *Poetria nova*, verses 1074–80, which begin:

Si qua feras igitur peregrina vel abdita verba,
Quid possis ex hoc ostendis jusque loquendi
Non attendis. Ab hac macula se retrahat error
Oris et obscuris oppone repagula verbis.

('If you bring thither outlandish or mysterious words, you betray your lack of ability and do not attend to the laws of discourse. Let error in discourse fly this taint by locking out obscure words.') Text and translation from Ernest Gallo, *The 'Poetria Nova' and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), pp. 70–73 (verses numbered 1079–82).

within a Christian context, it seems natural to find this critique of 'eddic' rules in Iceland in the fourteenth century, and Eysteinn's wording does not really make use of the notion of effeminate language. However, the notion did probably arrive at Iceland with *Poetria nova*, which also formulates the connection between obscure language and what is clearly effeminate language. There it is said about ornament:

Verbi prius inspice mentem
 Et demum faciem, cujus ne crede colori:
 Se nisi conformet color intimus exteriori,
 Sordet ibi ratio: faciem depingere verbi
 Est pictura luti, res est falsaria, ficta
 Forma, dealbatus paries et hypocritica verbum
 Se simulans aliquid, cum sit nihil. Haec sua forma
 Dissimulat deforme suum: se jactitat extra,
 Sed nihil intus habet; haec est pictura remota
 Quae placet, admota quae displicet.

(First examine the soul of a word and then its face, whose outward show alone you should not trust. Unless the inner ornament conforms to the outer requirement, the relationship between the two is worthless. Painting only the face of an expression results in a vile picture, a falsified thing, a faked form, a whitewashed wall, a verbal hypocrite which pretends to be something when it is nothing. Its form covers up its deformity; it vaunts itself outwardly but has no inner substance. This is the kind of picture which pleases at a distance, but displeases close up.)¹⁷

This quotation comprises notions of beauty as feigning and hypocrisy, and of adornment as proof of inward emptiness, and even includes the traditional iconographical slant in the bodily metaphors. *Poetria nova* was written in the beginning of the thirteenth century but quickly reached Iceland. These words have no direct equivalent in *Lilja*, which is not a treatise on poetics. However, *Lilja* carefully cultivates clarity and lack of effeminate language, and through its adherence to *Poetria nova* seems proof that the notion of effeminate language had reached Iceland in the fourteenth century at the latest.

The same rejection of 'eddic' rules is to be found in a poem by Árne Jónsson during the same century, where *kenningar* are said not to strengthen men but rather the opposite — possibly corresponding to the weakening effeminacy of voluptuous language.

Yfirmeisturum mun Eddu listar lofi heilagra líz mér hæfa
 allstirður sjá hróður virðaz ljós ritninga sætra vitni,

¹⁷ Text and translation from Gallo, *The 'Poetria Nova'*, pp. 52–53 (verses 744–53).

þeim er vilja svá grafa ok geyma en kenningar auka mǫnnum
grein klókasta fræðibóka; engan styrk en fagnað myrkva.

(The high masters of eddic art, those who wish to dig up and observe the rules of the wisest treatises, will find this poem very stiff. I think that the illuminated witness of sweet writings is suitable to praise holy men; kennings do not increase the strength of men but darken happiness.)¹⁸

This critique of adorned language is certainly at odds with traditional skaldic poetry and ‘eddic’ rules. However, the critique of ‘eddu regla’ mainly seems to concern obscurity, and possibly content, but it does not necessarily imply that kennings as such were regarded as effeminate or immoral. There are indications that the notion of effeminate language was at hand in Iceland, but explicit indications are late and inconclusive.

Skaldic Diction

Despite those few traces of critique discussed above, it rather seems that poetry was *not* associated with decadence, effeminacy, or voluptuousness in Old Norse. In antiquity, poetry was more readily regarded as effeminate and voluptuous than prose, as it employed so many stylistic devices, flattering the ears and the mind. In Old Norse, skaldic poetry to a very great extent employs such devices. This might be considered as evidence that the notion of effeminate language was unknown in Old Norse, but I would suggest the contrary.

Skaldic poetry with its extreme elaborations, complicated kennings, and resounding alliterations certainly fills many of the criteria for the classical notion of effeminate language. However, there is reason to believe that skaldic poetry was regarded as very much ‘male’: an instrument of power, an indication of skill and control, the kennings evoking all the powers of earlier days and the content mainly concerning heroic events. The powers attributed to skaldic poetry, as well as its importance for power and position in society, have been well illuminated in recent scholarship. There are of course poems that could be described as more lascivious, for example *mansöngur*, but genre and context are paramount here: avoiding effeminate language is less important in more private spheres. (The most consistent exception in all European countries to the desire to evade effeminate language is communication with God and Christ: in prayers and devotions the intentions and forms of language are always so reliable that a much higher degree

¹⁸ *Skjaldedigtning*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, BII, 461.

of emotional and passionate expression is allowed.) In this, Old Norse is consistent with European tradition.

In classical tradition, 'unmanly' language was seen either as threatening and powerful or as weak and sloppy, 'effeminate'. The two categories belong to the same complex: men risk being made effeminate by powerful voluptuous language, but in Old Norse literature it seems obvious that it is weak and effeminate language which is most to be feared, while skaldic adornment is manly and valorous. Skaldic poems mainly treat matters of violence and power, and it seems that their diction was considered quite in keeping with their content.

Saga Style

Traditional saga style is very much the antithesis of effeminate language, while the so-called 'florissante stil' employs the devices of Latin rhetoric and comes closer to traditional descriptions of effeminate language. Thus, it might seem that the terse Icelandic style was abandoned when Latin learning was introduced, but this is obviously not the case. As Meulengracht Sørensen clearly pointed out, the style was part of the message of the sagas. With reference to a series of scholars, he concluded that the ornate, 'learned' style is not necessarily a late phenomenon but rather the contrary: the evolution of style in the sagas was towards that simple saga style which was already valued as the conventional, domestic mode of expression. This choice of style was decidedly conscious, aiming to 're-create' a traditional style which was oral and not learned, suitable for domestic matters from the oldest times. The style in itself, according to Meulengracht Sørensen, was an expression of reverence for the past, the truly Icelandic.¹⁹

The question I wish to pursue here concerns the relation between the concept of honour, or rather virtue, and *form*. From this viewpoint, it should be pointed out that the scribes and 'authors' of the thirteenth century were actually well versed in all the stylistic devices of Latin rhetoric, but chose a terse, brief style with no use of sensual wording or coquettish elaborations. Granted, at an early stage the scribes' acquaintance with Latin rhetoric seems to have resulted in an embellished style, but the next stage was to elaborate a simple and pure saga style. Especially if it is true that this style was the result of conscious development — but even if this is not the case — the puristic style departs from the florid style in

¹⁹ Meulengracht Sørensen, *Fortælling og ære*, pp. 73–78. Another aspect of the power of language is of course the administrative, as described by Jack Goody, *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

a way that corresponds to the Attic style in relation to Asianism. In exploring the past of Iceland, it seems natural that the scribes would underline the manly prowess of the people. Structurally, and not least nationally, there is always a tendency to define others as the effeminate ones and oneself as the non-effeminate.²⁰

The Riddarasögur

The terse saga style may be of old origin, but it is obvious that it was also a conscious choice by those writers who recorded Icelandic history and tradition. Skaldic diction in general seems not to have been considered as effeminate, although it certainly exploits stylistic devices that were definitely associated with voluptuousness in antiquity. Thus, if any part of the classical notion of effeminate language exists in Old Norse, it must concern language that is not necessarily adorned, but sentimental, passionate, and *blauðr*.

Highly illustrative in this connection is the translation of romances into *riddarasögur*; not least the different reactions they have elicited among researchers. Recently, Daniel Sävborg has made an effort to disprove the view of earlier scholars. It has often been remarked that the French texts were heavily abbreviated when translated into Norse, and that what was abbreviated to a large extent was descriptions of love. Thus, scholars have concluded that the translations show less interest in chivalric rituals, mental states, subjectivism, emotional monologues, dialogues between lovers, etc. than their originals. One conclusion often drawn from this is that the abbreviations were made under the influence of the domestic saga style. Sävborg shows how another scholarly assumption, that the translator did not understand the original properly and thus ruined it, characterizes many discussions of *Tristrams saga*.²¹ On the contrary Sävborg himself wishes to show that the translations were not influenced by the style of the Icelandic sagas, and that the domestic sagas were not influenced by the chivalrous texts either. In arguing for this sharp division between simultaneously existing cultures, Sävborg states that a few early translations were not so abbreviated as has been supposed, and that *riddarasögur* (even abbreviated ones) typically contain chivalrous love depiction.

²⁰ Apart from Greek and Latin culture, there is a structural correspondence with the Swedish renaissance, where the attempt to create a domestic language and literature brings with it precisely this equation of Old Swedish and Classical Atticism (Malm, *Det liderliga språket*).

²¹ Daniel Sävborg, 'Norden och den höviska kärleken: Begrep riddarasagornas författare vad de sysslade med?', in *Reykholt och den norröna renässansen*, ed. by Karl G. Johansson and others (Reykholt: Háskólaútgáfan, 2007), pp. 157–78 (pp. 157–60).

Sävborg thus demonstrates that translations actually retain traces of the originals' love depiction, and that they do not incorporate the ways of depicting love which are typical of Icelandic sagas. To Sävborg, this shows that previous scholars have misinterpreted the translations when saying that the originals' love depiction has been misunderstood, badly handled, or neglected by the translators.²²

Obviously, it would be impossible to translate a text where love structures the whole story and at the same time purge it of all love. Apparently there was an interest in chivalrous love stories: otherwise there would have been no translations. And it is obvious that they were translated into *riddarasögur* in a manner that omitted much love description which was thought to be 'expendable'. Now, it is evident that what was 'expendable' were not vital elements of the plot, but mainly — as many scholars have observed — elements of style, subjective and emotional conversations and outbursts, explorations of feelings and inner emotions, metaphors, similes, and epithets. To make a simplified distinction: as content, love stories were imported with zeal, but as form, emotional discourse was imported with very much more discrimination. What was singled out, then, was language that could

²² I refer to Sävborg's study because it illuminates the issue of sensuous depiction, but I do not think his argument is entirely tenable. Sävborg states that previous scholars have only considered the degree of correspondence with the original and neglected the questions of whether a *riddarasaga* has a typically chivalrous description of love and whether it aligns its love description with traditional saga style (Sävborg, 'Norden och den höviska kärleken', p. 164). This allows Sävborg to assert that there is chivalrous love description in a *riddarasaga* and imply that previous scholars would have denied its presence. He also demonstrates that the ways of indicating love relationships which are conventional to Icelandic sagas, clichés such as that the lovers 'sit together' etc., have not been added in the translation — as if previous scholars have maintained that they were. Sävborg concludes that 'the clichés, motifs and formulas of the saga are entirely missing, and of its five tendencies (unadorned, indirect, outer appearance, weakened and brief statements) one finds nothing even in the most abridged *riddarasögur*' (Sävborg, 'Norden och den höviska kärleken', p. 172; cf. pp. 169–70 and 173). Hardly anyone would think of claiming that the translators added love descriptions to the originals: translators are rarely interested in adding content, and it is particularly hard to see why they would do so if they, as is suggested, are *less* interested in love description than their originals. Sävborg claims that this shows that there is no influence of Icelandic saga in the *riddarasögur*, but in effect proves the opposite. There is no evidence to support the view that the translators of the *riddarasögur* misunderstood their originals, but it seems obvious that it is the brevity and indirectness (compared to the originals) of love description and emotional expression in the *riddarasögur* which gives the impression that the Icelandic saga style has influenced the translations, i.e. the very act of reducing such discourse. Thus everything Sävborg says reinforces our impression that the *riddarasögur* do cut, abbreviate, and omit descriptions of love and passion. This in itself does not turn them into Icelandic sagas, but it makes them more like them, even though brevity is not easy to quantify. On the whole, showing that translations contain material from the originals does not contradict previous scholarship.

be apprehended as voluptuous or effeminate. It seems that this method was not only applied by the translators but lived on in later transmission. Sävborg shows that an early translation such as *Tristrams saga* actually follows the original unusually carefully and he makes it clear that omissions and abridgements were not necessarily the work only of the translator, but could have been made later during transmission by scribes as well. What this means is that there is ample evidence of an interest in translating or transmitting chivalrous stories, but that at the same time there was clearly a lack of enthusiasm for the language of love, language which came close to effeminacy.

As Sävborg points out, Marianne Kalinke has already demonstrated that the *riddarasögur* should not be judged as incompetent translations or misunderstandings of their originals. She stated:

Despite deletion and condensation of French text, there is ample evidence that the translators/redactors were concerned with style and not merely with content, that they too could depict emotion, albeit in a manner somewhat different from that of the great French authors.²³

Kalinke convincingly shows that, even though they condense and abbreviate, the translators were very much concerned with style. Alliteration, antithesis, parallelisms, synonyms, enumerations, alliterating pairs, and rhythmic constructions are features employed in the translations. Kalinke discusses a passage in *Tristrams saga* which is highly illustrative not least because it is possible to compare it closely with the French version, and concludes:

Stylistic effort has been lavished on this passage. [...] In this manner one is unaware that a significant number of verses of Thomas' text have not been transmitted (vv. 199–232), verses in which the author depicts Tristan's long drawn-out agony [...]. To be sure, one can lament the loss of Thomas' text in translation, but one should not be too harsh on Brother Robert. The text as it stands — if one can refrain from making comparisons with the French — is rhetorically and stylistically effective.²⁴

²³ Marianne E. Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest: The Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagana, 37 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1981), pp. 131–77, quotation from p. 174 where it is also said: 'Far from dismissing the *riddarasögur* as summaries lacking any sense of style, they should be considered without prejudice and as individual works. Despite the homogeneity of the Arthurian *riddarasögur* by virtue of their content and a common repertoire of rhetorical devices, the translated romances nonetheless evince considerable diversity in the application of the stylistic techniques that are generally considered to be their hallmark.'

²⁴ Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, pp. 168–69.

Thus the translators were no strangers to stylistic devices. It would certainly be surprising if the style of the originals were no longer perceptible, if it had been totally removed; and as has been shown above, not all stylistic devices may have been regarded as effeminate, at least when used in skaldic poetry. Still, it is obvious that emotional discourse was often shortened and sometimes entirely removed, despite the fact that the translators were undeniably fully proficient with the rhetorical devices. The translators' familiarity with rhetoric implies that they could also achieve rhetorical effect through the very lack of stylistic embellishment. However, Kalinke shows that the translations do not only condense but in some passages amplify the original. She concludes that such amplifications are consciously used to intensify or stress aspects which are not central in the French originals. Judging by her examples the passages amplified concern not chivalrous emotions but matters of dignity and honourable behaviour — relating to being *hvatr* as opposed to *blauðr*.²⁵

Evidently the romances were translated for a reason, and as Kalinke shows, the translators 'were neither insensitive nor uninterested in some of the more formal aspects of the narrative art'.²⁶ I would suggest that while the translations themselves reveal that there was considerable interest in the courtly stories, the same translations reveal that their form was considered more suspicious than their content. That is, language itself was regarded with more moral caution than the events described. Emotional, embellished language was trimmed into a form more consistent with the norms by which the Norse translators and scribes worked. Adorned, emotional language was a natural part of the imported sagas, but the translators saw a need to employ it only when the situation made it legitimate. The *riddarasögur* were not translated into the style which is characteristic of sagas of Icelanders, the common saga style, but they were filtered through the same set of norms and the same notion of language as that which characterized saga style.

Conclusion

Reservations about effeminate language are seldom explicitly voiced, but seem to be practically unavoidable in any pre-eighteenth-century society that has a strong code of honour, virtue, and value. Notions of effeminate language appear to have been quite a common consequence of the view of gender and honour in early

²⁵ Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, p. 140; pp. 138–43.

²⁶ Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest*, p. 174.

societies such as that of medieval Iceland, and this view was also inherent in rhetorical tradition. It is impossible to determine precisely how much of this was due to influence from Latin learning and how much was a basic consequence of the predominant codes of honour, but in Old Norse literary production it is a factor to be considered. There is not much explicit evidence of the notion in Icelandic sources, though it becomes more apparent in the fourteenth century. As we have seen, poetry was apprehended quite differently in medieval Iceland from the way it was in antiquity: while poetic adornment was readily associated with effeminacy in classical rhetorical discussions, adornment and poetry were on the whole closely connected with power and manliness in Iceland.

On the other hand, Icelandic literature displays a definite predisposition for language which is not emotional, soft, passionate, or 'weak'. This is true of skaldic poetry, and it is true of saga style, which should be seen as a deliberate choice, one which avoids the florid style. The most illuminating example of how this set of norms works is the translations of *riddarasögur*, where stories were imported because they were found attractive or useful, but their language was filtered because it was found effeminate. This is one indication that the Icelandic saga style was — consciously or not — seen in relation to effeminate, voluptuous language.

Repugnance towards effeminate language was expressed most succinctly by Quintilian: 'ornatus [...] virilis et fortis et sanctus sit nec effeminatam levitatem et fuco ementitum colorem amet: sanguine et viribus niteat' ('ornament must be manly, strong, and chaste. It must not favour effeminate smoothness or the false colouring of cosmetics; it must shine with health and vigour').²⁷ This corresponds very well with saga style, and it also corresponds with the ideals of skaldic poetry — where adornment manages to be considered manly instead of effeminate. This is not to say that the classical notion of effeminate language lay at the roots of saga style, only that these ideas must have reached Iceland through learning and religion and that this should be understood as part of the context in which Icelandic culture was, by means of language, conceived of as 'non-effeminate' in the forging of a written saga style. Effeminate language and its opposite are the precise equivalents of the lack of manly valour (being *blauðr*) and its opposite (the manly ideal of being *hvatr* which Clover described and which is clearly portrayed in the sagas). As such, effeminate language *proves* lack of manliness in the speaker, just as in classical rhetoric. And just as in classical rhetoric, language is used to convey the valour and morals of the content.

²⁷ Quintilian, *The Orator's Education*, 8.3.6.

ÆLFRIC IN ICELAND

Kari Ellen Gade

Introduction

Twenty years ago, in her stimulating monograph on Snorri Sturluson's *ars poetica* and medieval theories of language, Margaret Clunies Ross suggested that a variety of foreign scholarly texts could have been brought back to Iceland by Icelanders studying in England or on the Continent, and that such materials could have circulated in Icelandic classrooms in the form of lecture notes, anthologies, or *florilegia*.¹ The present study explores that suggestion in more detail, focussing on the connections between England and Iceland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and, more specifically, on the influence that Ælfric's vernacular grammar may have had on the medieval Icelandic grammatical literature.² It will become clear that parts of that grammar must have been used in Iceland in the instruction of Latin and, furthermore, that Ælfric's vernacular grammatical terminology served as a model for the terminology in Óláfr Þórðarson's *Third Grammatical Treatise*.

¹ Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), pp. 14, 28–29, 33–34, 63, 156–57, 159–62.

² For Icelanders studying abroad, see Edith Marold, 'Zur Poetik von Háttatal und Skáldskaparmál', in *Quantitätsproblematik und Metrik: Greifswalder Symposion zur germanischen Grammatik*, ed. by Hans Fix, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 42 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), pp. 103–24 (pp. 105–06); Paul A. White, *Non-Native Sources for the Scandinavian Kings' Sagas*, *Studies in Medieval History and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 14–21.

Old English and Old Icelandic Vernacular Grammars

Aside from a short Old Irish primer, Ælfric's *Excerptiones de arte grammatica anglie* (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* hereafter) is the earliest grammar of Latin that uses the vernacular as its medium.³ Ælfric wrote the grammar when he was teaching elementary Latin at the monastery of Cerne Abbas in Dorset, between 992 and 1002.⁴ As he states in the preface, its purpose was to instruct young people in the art of Latin grammar, so that they could learn to comprehend the holy writings (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 2–3). The main source of *Excerptiones*, which was not discovered until the 1980s, was an abridged version of Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* known as *Excerptiones de Prisciano* (Priscian's *Excerptiones*), which also incorporates materials from other sources, such as Priscian's *Partitiones* and *De accentibus*, as well as Donatus's *Ars maior* and Isidore's *Etymologiae*.⁵ Ælfric's *Excerptiones* was soon widely disseminated. It completely displaced other grammars at the elementary level and retained its position into the twelfth century. The last extant medieval copy was made by the 'Scribe of the Tremulous Hand', active at Worcester in the first half of the thirteenth century.⁶

After Ælfric, the earliest tradition of grammars in the vernacular flourished in Iceland from the mid-twelfth to the early fourteenth century. During that period a total of four grammatical treatises (and a fragment of a fifth) were written, which are conventionally labeled *The First*, *Second*, *Third*, and *Fourth Grammatical Treatises*. *The First Grammatical Treatise* is dated to around 1130–40, and the

³ See Vivien Law, *The History of Linguistics in Europe from Plato to 1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 191–92. Ælfric's *Excerptiones* is referred to by page number in brackets in the main text, in the following edition: *Ælfrics Grammatik und Glossar. Erste Abteilung: Text und Varianten*, ed. by Julius Zupitza, *Sammlung englischer Denkmäler in kritischen Ausgaben*, 1 (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1880).

⁴ See Vivien Law, 'Anglo-Saxon England: Aelfric's "Excerptiones de arte grammatica Anglice"', *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 9 (1987), 47–71 (pp. 50–51); Law, *History of Linguistics*, pp. 193–94.

⁵ *Excerptiones de Prisciano*, ed. by David W. Porter, *Anglo-Saxon Texts*, 4 (Cambridge: Brewer, 2002). I am grateful to Margaret Clunies Ross for bringing this edition to my attention. For the sources of Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and Priscian's *Excerptiones*, see Teresa Pàroli, 'Le opere grammaticali di Aelfric', *Annali istituto orientale di Napoli: Sezione germanica*, 10 (1967), 5–43, and 'Le opere grammaticali di Aelfric – II', *Annali istituto orientale di Napoli: Sezione germanica*, 11 (1968), 133; Law, 'Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 51–54; Priscian's *Excerptiones*, pp. 23–27.

⁶ Law, 'Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 63–64; Law, *History of Linguistics*, pp. 195–96.

author's goal was to adapt the Latin alphabet to the Icelandic language.⁷ *The Second Grammatical Treatise* (from around 1270–1300) also deals with orthography.⁸ *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, which will be the focus of the present study because of its ties to Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, was written by Óláfr Þórðarson around 1250.⁹ *The Third Grammatical Treatise* falls into two parts. The first section, 'The Foundation of Grammar' (*Málfræðinnar grundvöllr*), is a vernacular paraphrase of a version of Priscian's *Institutiones* with additional materials from other sources. The second part, 'The Knowledge of the Ornaments of Diction' (*Málskrúðsfræði*) is based on Book III of Donatus's *Ars maior*, with examples from vernacular poetry illustrating Donatus's rhetorical categories.¹⁰ *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* (between 1319 and 1350) draws on Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale* with additions from Eberhard of Béthune's *Graecismus*. This treatise deals

⁷ See Anne Holtmark, *En islandsk scholasticus fra det 12. århundre*, Skrifter utgitt av det norske videnskaps-akademi i Oslo, II. Hist.-filos. klasse, No. 3 (Oslo: Dybwad, 1936); *The First Grammatical Treatise: The Earliest Germanic Phonology*, ed. by Einar Haugen, 2nd edn (London: Longman, 1972); *The First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Hreinn Benediktsson, University of Iceland Publications in Linguistics, 1 (Reykjavík: Institute of Nordic Linguistics, 1972); Hreinn Benediktsson, 'The First Grammatical Treatise: The Fundamentals of its Theory of Orthography', in *Linguistic Studies, Historical and Comparative by Hreinn Benediktsson*, ed. by Guðrún Þórhallsdóttir, Höskuldur Þráinsson, Jón G. Friðjónsson, and Kjartan Ottoson (Reykjavík: Institute of Linguistics, 2002), pp. 3–17.

⁸ See *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà, *Filologia Germanica testi e studi*, 2 (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1982).

⁹ Edited by Björn Magnússon Ólsen (*Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatiske afhandlingers prolog og to andre tilleg*, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 12 (Copenhagen: Knudtzon, 1884)); Finnur Jónsson (*Óláfr Þórðarson málhljóða- og málskrúðsrit: Grammatisk-retorisk afhandling*, Det kgl. danske videnskabernes selskab: Historisk-filologiske meddelelser, XIII, 2 (Copenhagen: Høst, 1927)); Thomas Krömmelbein (*Óláfr Þórðarson Hvítaskáld: Dritte grammatische Abhandlung*, *Studia Nordica*, 3 (Oslo: Novus, 1998)); Tarrin Wills ('The Foundation of Grammar: An Edition of the First Section of Óláfr Þórðarson's Grammatical Treatise' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2001); online at <<http://www-personal.arts.usyd.edu.au/tarwills/thesis>>). For biographies of Óláfr Þórðarson, see *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, pp. xxxii–xxxvii; *Óláfr Þórðarson*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 3–12.

¹⁰ See *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, pp. xxxviii–xl; *Óláfr Þórðarson*, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 12–13; Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*, p. 26; Valeria Micillo, 'Classical Tradition and Norse Tradition in the "Third Grammatical Treatise"', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 68–79; Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', pp. 2–4, 108–47.

with rhetoric only and appears to have been intended as a continuation and completion of the second part of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*.¹¹

Since the publication of the first critical edition of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* in 1884, scholars have noticed that certain sections in the first part of that work bear a strong resemblance to the corresponding sections of Ælfric's *Excerptiones*.¹² In his 1884 edition, Björn Magnússon Ólsen concluded that Óláfr could not have known Ælfric's *Excerptiones*; rather, his Latin manuscripts must have come from England and must have drawn on the same Latin sources as Ælfric's *Excerptiones*.¹³ Although the Latin sources used by Óláfr in the first part of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* have been discussed in detail in later scholarship,¹⁴ the question of possible Ælfrician influence on the Icelandic treatise has not been addressed. In the most recent and most complete critical edition of the first part of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, Wills lists the pertinent correspondences between Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and Óláfr's *Treatise*, but he does not suggest that Óláfr might have had access to a copy of Ælfric's *Excerptiones*.¹⁵

In the present study, I shall assess the Old English influence on the Old Norse grammatical literature in more detail. First, I shall discuss one passage that is recorded both in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* and in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and for which scholars have found no direct source. Second, I shall give an overview of the correspondences between the vernacular grammatical vocabulary used by Óláfr and Ælfric. In the third part, I shall examine a fragment of an Old Icelandic Latin primer, found in the manuscript AM 921 III 4°. The discussion will show that the fragment is a direct copy of a section in Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, and that the Old English terms have been replaced by the corresponding Old Icelandic vocabulary.

¹¹ See *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, pp. xlii–xliii; Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*, p. 26.

¹² See *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, pp. xxxviii–xxxix, 37, 59; *Dritte grammatische Abhandlung*, ed. by Krömmelbein, p. 95; Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', pp. 119, 143, 155, 157–58.

¹³ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, p. xxxix.

¹⁴ Micillo, 'Classical Tradition'; Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', pp. 108–47, 152–91.

¹⁵ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', pp. 119, 143, 155, 157–58.

The Third Grammatical Treatise, *Priscian's* *Excerptiones*, and *Ælfric's* *Excerptiones*

Both Óláfr's and Ælfric's works were written for instructional purposes, but their didactic goals were diametrically opposed. Ælfric's vernacular grammar was intended to help students understand the structure of Latin, that is, it is a vernacular-medium grammar of Latin; Óláfr's treatise, on the other hand, is a handbook of Old Norse language and poetics, structured according to the principles of Latin grammar and rhetoric, that is, it is a vernacular-medium grammar of the vernacular.¹⁶ Because both Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and the first part of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* are based on versions of Priscian's *Institutiones*, there are, of course, similarities between the two works with regard to both structure and wording. However, there is a small section in both the Old English and the Old Norse text that is not found in Priscian's *Institutiones*. The passage in question concerns the indivisibility of the letter, and it occurs in both Old English and Old Norse versions at the beginning of the section on the letter. Priscian gives the following definition of the letter:

Litera est pars minima vocis compositae, hoc est quae constat compositione literarum, minima autem, quantum ad totam comprehensionem vocis literatae — ad hanc enim etiam productae vocales brevissimae partes inveniuntur — vel quod omnium est brevissimum eorum, quae dividi possunt, id quod dividi non potest. possumus et sic definire: litera est vox, quae scribi | potest individua.¹⁷

(The letter is the smallest part of a continuous utterance, that is, one that is made up of a combination of letters. It is the smallest [part], insofar as the entire classification of utterances made up of letters is concerned — in which [classification] in fact lengthened vowels turn out to be very short elements — or because it [the letter], since it cannot be divided, is the smallest of all things that can be divided. We can define it thus: the letter is a sound that can be written indivisibly [i.e. with an indivisible character].)

In his *Treatise*, Óláfr incorporates the first part of Priscian's definition, but he then goes on to comment on the indivisibility of the letter:

¹⁶ Law, *History of Linguistics*, pp. 191–92.

¹⁷ *Grammatici Latini*, 8 vols, vols I–VII ed. by Heinrich Keil, vol. VIII ed. by H. Hagen (Leipzig: Teubner, 1857–80; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1961) [hereafter *GL*]. Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* are ed. by M. Hertz in vols II–III, here II, 6. All translations from Latin, Old Norse, and Old English are my own. I am grateful to Robert D. Fulk for consultations concerning translations from the Latin.

Stafr er hinn minzti hlutr raddar samansettrar, sem rita má, ok er stafr kallaðr hinn minzti hlutr eða óskiptiligr í því, sem heyrir allri samsetning stafligrar raddar, þvíat vér skiptum bœkr í kapitula, en kapitula í klausur eða vers, en klausur í málsgreinir, málsgreinir í sagnir, sagnir í samstofur, samstofur í stafr.¹⁸

(The letter [*stafr*] is the smallest part of a continuous utterance [lit. composite voice] that can be written, and the letter is called the smallest part or indivisible in that which concerns the entire composition of utterances made up of letters [lit. of writeable voice], because we divide books into chapters, and chapters into sections or verses, and sections into sentences, sentences into words, words into syllables, syllables into letters.)

This section, which has no correspondence in Priscian's *Institutiones*, is also found in both Ælfric's *Excerptiones* (4–5) and Priscian's *Excerptiones* (44):

LITTERA is staef on englisc and is se læsta dæl on bōcum and untōdæledlic. wē tōdælað þā bōc tō cwydum and syððan ðā cwydas tō dælum, eft ðā dælas tō staefgefēgum and syððan þā staefgefēgu tō stafum.

(LITTERA is letter [*staef*] in English and it is the smallest part in books and indivisible. We divide the book into sentences and then the sentences into words, thereafter the words into syllables and then the syllables into letters.)

Littera est pars minima uocis composite, hoc est que constat ex compositone litterarum. Possumus et sic diffinire: littera est uox, que scribi potest indiuidua. Ergo quia indiuidua est, minima est omnium, que diuidi possunt. Diuidimus namque codicem in sententias, sententias in partes, partes in sillabas, sillabas in litteras. Littere uero indiuisibiles sunt, unde et a philosophis athomi uocantur.

(The letter is the smallest part of a continuous utterance, one that is made up of a combination of letters. We can define it thus: the letter is a sound that can be written indivisibly [i.e. with an indivisible character]. And thus, because it is indivisible, it is the smallest of all things that can be divided. We divide a book into sentences, sentences into parts, parts into syllables, syllables into letters. The letters are indeed indivisible and so they are called *atoms* by philosophers.)

The statement on the indivisibility of the letter appears to have been incorporated into Priscian's *Excerptiones* (and, subsequently, into Ælfric's *Excerptiones*) from Sergius's commentary on Donatus (*GL*, IV, 475; see Priscian's *Excerptiones* 327):¹⁹

Littera dicta est quasi legitima, eo quod quasi legentibus iter ad legendum ostendat vel quod scripta deleri possit. ideo || dixit partem minimam esse litteram vocis articulatae, quod, cum omnis oratio solvatur in verba, verba denuo solvantur in syllabas, rursum syllabae solvantur in litteras, littera sola non habet quo solvatur. ideo || a philosophis atomos dicitur.

¹⁸ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 80.

¹⁹ See also Pàroli, 'Le opere grammaticali di Aelfric', p. 12.

(*Littera* [letter] is said to be like *legitera* because it shows to the readers the road to that which is to be read [*legens* + *iter* 'writing-way'], or because when written it can be deleted [*litura* 'erasure']). Thus he [Donatus] said that the letter is the smallest part of a distinct utterance, because, although all speech is resolved into words, and words again are resolved into syllables, and the syllables are again resolved into letters, only the letter has nothing into which it is resolved. Hence it is called *atomos* by philosophers.)

In Sergius's commentary, the comparison between the letter and the atom follows two etymologies of *littera* commonly found in medieval writings on grammar.²⁰ Those etymologies are omitted at this point in Priscian's *Excerptiones*, because they occur in the next section of the Priscian text cited by the compiler (44; cf. Priscian in *GL*, II, 6). None of the etymologies is given in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* or in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, most likely because they did not lend themselves to the vernacular medium.

The section on the atom is also found in Isidore's *Etymologiae*: 'Vnus autem atomus est, quia insecabilis est. Sic et littera: nam orationem dividis in verba, verba in syllabas, syllabam in litteras. Littera, pars minima, atomus est, nec dividi potest'²¹ ('the atom, however, is singular because it is indivisible. Of such a kind is also the letter: you divide the speech into syllables, the syllable into letters. The letter, the smallest part, is the atom, and it can also not be divided'). Scholars have suggested that the statement concerning the indivisibility of the letter in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* ultimately derives from Isidore.²² In Isidore, however, this section is not given in his discussion of the *littera* in Book I, but in his description of the world in Book XIII ('De mundo et partibus'). It is difficult to believe that Óláfr (if he had access to Isidore), would have excised this particular section and inserted it into his Priscian text in exactly the same place as it occurs in Priscian's *Excerptiones* and Ælfric's *Excerptiones*.

The comparison between the atom and the letter is not unique to Isidore, Sergius, Priscian's *Excerptiones*, Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, and *The Third Grammatical Treatise*. In fact, this section is a commonplace in medieval commentaries on Donatus's *Ars maior*, and it is found in the *Explanatio Litterae* (*GL*, IV, 519), Sedulius Scottus, *In Donati artem maiorem*, Murethach, *In Donati artem*

²⁰ See Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: 'Grammatica' and Literary Theory, 350–1100*, Cambridge Studies in Medieval Literature, 19 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 98–101, 489 n. 35.

²¹ Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae sive Origines* XIII.ii.4: 'De atomis', ed. by W. M. Lindsay. 2 vols, *Scriptorum classicorum Bibliotheca Oxoniensis* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911; repr. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Further citations are to this edition.

²² Óláfr Þórðarson, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 22 n.; Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 119.

maiores, Donatus Ortigraphus, *Ars grammatica*, and Remigius of Auxerre, *Commentum in Donati artem maiorem* (GL, VIII, 222).²³ It also is recorded in medieval works on computation, such as Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de computo* and in Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*.²⁴ In the grammatical works above, the statement concerning the indivisibility of the letter is used to expand on Donatus's definition of the letter (*Ars maior*; GL, IV, 367): 'Littera est pars minima vocis articulatae' ('the letter is the smallest part of a distinct utterance'). In Priscian's *Excerptiones*, Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, and *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, however, this section is incorporated into the text of Priscian's *Institutiones*, qualifying 'littera est pars minima vocis compositae' ('the letter is the smallest part of a continuous utterance') (GL, II, 6; Priscian's *Excerptiones* 44): *inn minzti hlutr* ('the smallest part'), *óskiptilig* ('indivisible'),²⁵ *se læsta dæl* ('the smallest part'), *untōdæledlic* ('indivisible') (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 4–5). Both Ælfric and Óláfr omit the reference to the atom, but that could be due to the fact that they considered that information irrelevant. One might then conclude that Óláfr follows Priscian's *Excerptiones* here. A comparison of the texts in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, however, shows that the sentence preceding the clause on the indivisibility of the letter in Óláfr's *Treatise* stems from a Priscian text and not from Ælfric's *Excerptiones*. Furthermore, if we look closely at the wording of this section in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, in the *Institutiones*, and in Priscian's *Excerptiones*, it is clear that Óláfr follows Priscian's *Institutiones* and not his *Excerptiones*. He includes the phrase 'in that which concerns the entire composition of utterances made up of letters [lit. of writeable voice]' (cf. 'quantum ad totam comprehensionem vocis literatae'), which is in the *Institutiones* but has been omitted in Priscian's *Excerptiones*.

²³ Sedulius Scottus. In *Donati artem maiorem*, ed. by Bengt Löfstedt, *Grammatici Hibernici Carolini Aevi*, pars III, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, 40B (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), pp. 5–6. Murethach (Muridac), In *Donati artem maiorem*, ed. by Louis Holtz, *Grammatici Hibernici Carolini Aevi*, pars I, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, 40 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1977), p. 7. Donatus Ortigraphus, *Ars grammatica*, ed. by John Chittenden, *Grammatici Hibernici Carolini Aevi*, pars. IV, Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, 40D (Turnhout: Brepols, 1982), p. 7.

²⁴ Hrabanus Maurus, *Liber de computo*, *Patrologiae cursus completus omium SS. patrum, doctorum scriptorumque ecclesiasticorum*, Series latina, ed. by J.-P. Migne, 107 (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1864), cols 669–728 (col. 677); Byrhtferth's *Enchiridion*, ed. by Peter S. Baker and Michael Lapidge, vol. 1: *Text, Translation, Sources and Appendices*, EETS, SS, 15 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 110.

²⁵ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 80.

An examination of other correspondences between Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and *The Third Grammatical Treatise* confirms that Óláfr's Latin source text cannot have been a version of Priscian's *Excerptiones*. When Óláfr departs from the *Institutiones* and appears to follow Ælfric, much of the added material is not in Priscian's *Excerptiones*. For instance, in the section on the parts of speech ('De partibus orationis'), both Ælfric and Óláfr silently abandon Priscian's order in favour of Donatus's scheme (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 8–11; Priscian's *Excerptiones* 58). However, Óláfr is unaware of the fact that he is not citing Priscian at this point: 'En meistari Priscianus telr átta parta málsgreinar þessa'²⁶ ('but master Priscian enumerates these eight parts of speech') (cf. Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 8: 'eahta dælas synd lēdenspræce' ('there are eight parts of speech')). Both Ælfric and Óláfr add a separate definition of the interjection, which is taken from Donatus's *Ars maior* (GL, IV, 391): 'Interiectio est pars orationis interiecta aliis partibus orationis ad exprimendos animi adfectus' ('the interjection is a part of speech intermingled with the other parts of speech to express the disposition of the mind'). *The Third Grammatical Treatise* defines the interjection as follows: 'Meðalorpning sýnir hugþokka manns, ok er hon jafnan fráskilið öðrum þortum [...]'²⁷ ('The interjection [lit. between-throwing] shows a person's state of mind, and it is always separated from the other parts of speech [...]'). Ælfric gives the following definition (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 10–11): 'INTERIECTIO is betwuxāworpennyss. se dæl lið betwux öðrum wordum and geswutelað þæs mōdes styrunge' ('interiectio is interjection [lit. between-throwing]. This part is placed between other words and reveals the disturbance of the mind'). In these places, then, Ælfric and Óláfr depart from Priscian (and Priscian's *Excerptiones*) and follow Donatus, both in terms of the order of the parts of speech and the definition of the interjection.

At the end of his grammar Ælfric, following Priscian's *Excerptiones*, incorporates a discussion of the thirty divisions of grammar, which is loosely based on Isidore (*Etymologiae* I.v.1): 'Grammatica est scientia recte loquenti, et origo et fundamentum liberalium litterarum' ('grammar is the science of speaking correctly and the source and foundation of the liberal sciences'). In Ælfric's words (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 289):

Se cræft geopenað and gehylt lēdenspræce, and nān man næfð lēdenbōca andgit befullon,
būton hē þone cræft cunne. se cræft is ealra bōclīca cræfta ordfruma and grundweall.

²⁶ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 98.

²⁷ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 98.

(This art opens and upholds the Latin language, and no man has completely the understanding of Latin books unless he knows this art. This art is the source and foundation of all literary arts.)

The corresponding place in Priscian's *Excerptiones* is closer to Isidore than to Ælfric's *Excerptiones* (Priscian's *Excerptiones* 318):

Grammatica est disciplinalis ars ex litteris constans et est scientia recte loquendi et origo uel fundamentum artium liberalium.

(Grammar is the art of the disciplines of letters and is the science of speaking correctly and the source and foundation of the liberal arts.)

In *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, Óláfr begins the second part of his treatise (after his discussion of the eight parts of speech) with the following statement:

Dónátús kennir í fyrri bók sinni náttúru parta þeira allra, er hafa þarf í réttu látínu-máli, ok má engi maðr fullkomliga vel skilja ok mæla þá tungu, nema þessa bók kunni.²⁸

(In his first book, Donatus teaches the nature of all those parts [of speech] which are needed in correct Latin language, and no man can completely understand and speak that language unless he knows this book.)

The wording of Óláfr's *Treatise* closely mirrors that of Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, but the last sentence in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* is not in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*. Curiously enough, that clause is incorporated into the previous section of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, namely, in Óláfr's discussion of the noun: 'Nafn er æzt allra sagna, þvíat þat er svá sem efni eða grundvöllr alls máls'²⁹ ('the noun is the foremost of all words because it is like the material and foundation of all speech'). Ælfric and Óláfr even avail themselves of the same vernacular term for Latin *fundamentum* (OE *grundweall*; ON *grundvöllr*).

The Third Grammatical Treatise incorporates a wealth of material from Priscian that is not given in Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, and Óláfr's Icelandic renditions of the Latin are always closer to the text of the *Institutiones* than to that of Priscian's *Excerptiones*. Thus we can conclude that Óláfr did use a Latin version of Priscian's *Institutiones*, but not in the form of Ælfric's source, Priscian's *Excerptiones*, as earlier scholars have suggested.³⁰ Whether Óláfr had access to Ælfric's *Excerptiones* or parts of

²⁸ Óláfr Þórðarson, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 39.

²⁹ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 98.

³⁰ We know that a copy of Priscian's work was available in Denmark in the twelfth century (GKS 188 4°; see Holtsmark, *En islandsk scholasticus*, p. 35). Óláfr Þórðarson spent time at the Danish court prior to the composition of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, and it is not unlikely that he could have become acquainted with Priscian's *Institutiones* during that stay.

that grammar (in the form of glosses or lecture notes?) cannot be established with certainty, but in view of the verbal and structural correspondences between the two works it cannot be excluded. In the following section, this possibility will be explored in more detail.

Óláfr's and Ælfric's Grammatical Terminology

Óláfr and Ælfric have been hailed as innovators of vernacular grammatical terminology. Both availed themselves of what appears to be a native, established vocabulary, but they also coined terms that were either word-by-word translations of the Latin or calques on the Latin words. In their translations of *interiectio* above, for example, Ælfric and Óláfr proceed in the same way, namely, by translating the two parts of the Latin word *inter-iectio* as *betwux-* or *meðal-* 'between' and *-āworpenness* or *-orþning* 'throwing'.³¹ *Betwuxāworpenness* and *meðalorþning* were apparently invented by Ælfric and Óláfr respectively, and the terms are not attested outside of Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and *The Third Grammatical Treatise*.

Ælfric's vernacular technical grammatical vocabulary has been discussed extensively in earlier scholarship,³² and the grammatical terminology in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* has also been the subject of studies.³³ Because both Ælfric and Óláfr use the vernacular as a medium, scholars have occasionally commented on similarities or dissimilarities between the two works.³⁴ Micillo concludes that, unlike Ælfric's *Excerptiones*, which was aimed at an audience of beginners, Óláfr's intended audience was apparently much more sophisticated and well educated.³⁵ However, the fact that the Old Icelandic grammatical terminology used by Óláfr is intimately connected with Ælfric's Old English vocabulary seems to have

³¹ OE *betwux* 'between' has no cognate in Old Norse, but the second parts of the compounds are both derived from the past participles of the verb 'to throw' (OE *weorpan* and ON *verpa*).

³² Edna Rees Williams, 'Ælfric's Grammatical Terminology', *PMLA*, 73 (1958), 453–62; Teresa Pàroli, 'Indice della terminologia grammaticale di Aelfric', *Annali istituto orientale di Napoli: Sezione linguistica*, 8 (1968), 113–38; Law, 'Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 62–63.

³³ Tryggvi Gíslason, 'Íslenzk málfræðiheiti miðalda – merking þeirra, fyrirmyndir og saga' (unpublished master's thesis, University of Iceland, 1967); Valeria Micillo, 'La terminologia tecnica nel terzo trattato grammaticale islandese', *Annali istituto orientale di Napoli: Sezione germanica*, n.s., 4 (1994), 125–42.

³⁴ Compare Tryggvi Gíslason, 'Íslenzk málfræðiheiti miðalda', p. 19; Micillo, 'La terminologia tecnica', pp. 126–27, 132–33, 135–37.

³⁵ Micillo, 'La terminologia tecnica', pp. 126–27

escaped scholarly notice, and no study so far has commented on the similarities between the Old English and the Old Icelandic *termini technici*. In the following, I shall give an overview of some of the grammatical terms found in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* and show how the grammatical vocabulary used by Óláfr is indebted to Ælfric's Old English terminology.³⁶

Earlier scholars have pointed out that Óláfr drew on an established grammatical terminology, but that he must also have coined a number of the grammatical terms in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* himself.³⁷ To be sure, the author of *The First Grammatical Treatise*, writing approximately one century prior to the composition of *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, availed himself of a grammatical vocabulary that was in part native, in part couched in the Latin grammatical tradition, and in part adapted from Old English terminology, for example, *stafr* 'letter' (OE *stæf* 'letter'), *stafróf* 'alphabet' (OE *stæfræw* 'alphabet'), *samhljóðendr*, *samhljóðandi* 'con-sonantes' (OE *samod swegend* 'con-sonantes'), *raddarstafr* 'vocal-letter, vowel' (OE *clypol* 'vowel'), *samstafa* 'syllable' (OE *stæfgefæg* 'syllable'), *nafn* 'name, nomen' (OE *nama* 'name, nomen'), etc.³⁸ This terminology was adopted by Óláfr in his *Treatise*, and it must have been part and parcel of the grammatical vocabulary taught in thirteenth-century Icelandic schools.

In other cases, the Old Icelandic and Old English grammatical terms are the usual translations of the corresponding Latin words, and the Old English and Old Norse words are cognates, as in (1) below:³⁹

³⁶ The comparison is not exhaustive, because such an overview would go beyond the scope of the present study. The OE and ON vocabulary is taken from Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and *The Third Grammatical Treatise*, and it has been cross-checked against the lists provided by Williams, 'Ælfric's Grammatical Terminology'; Pàroli, 'Indice della terminologia'; *Den tredje og fjerde grammatisk afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, pp. 301–35; Óláfr Þórðarson, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, pp. 111–16; Tryggvi Gíslason, 'Íslensk málfræðiheiti miðalda'; Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', pp. 101–05.

³⁷ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatisk afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, p. xl; Óláfr Þórðarson, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, p. 13.

³⁸ See Holtsmark, *En islandsk scholasticus*, pp. 27, 75; *First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Haugen, pp. 49–69; *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Raschellá, pp. 115–21; Marold, 'Zur Poetik von Háttatal und Skáldskaparmál', pp. 109, 118; *The First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Hreinn Benediktson. On the possibility that the first grammarian could have been educated in England, see Holtsmark, *En islandsk scholasticus*, pp. 75–112; *First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Haugen, pp. 74–76.

³⁹ Wills, 'Foundation of Grammar', p. 101, distinguishes between the following categories: 'normal translation of the Latin term'; 'calque on Latin compound'; 'direct loan word from Latin'; 'vernacular cognate of the Latin term'; 'Icelandic word'. While these classifications are useful, they

(1) Usual translation of the Latin term: Old Norse and Old English cognates

ON	OE	Lat.
dumbir 'dumb' (pl.)	dumbe	mutae
fall 'fall'	fyll	casus
kyn 'gender, species'	cynn	genus
mátrr 'might'	miht	potestas
orð 'word'	word	verbum
tala 'number'	getel	numerus
tíð 'time'	tíð	tempus

The similarities between the Old English and the Old Norse vocabulary are striking. It is difficult to say whether these terms are independent Old Norse creations or whether they were formed by analogy with the Old English vocabulary. OE *fyll* for Lat. 'casus' appears to have been coined by Ælfric, and it (i.e. *fall*) is used in that sense by Óláfr throughout *The Third Grammatical Treatise*.⁴⁰ The only earlier attested occurrence of *fall* 'casus' that I have been able to find is in a fragment of a Latin-Old Norse glossary from the beginning of the thirteenth century⁴¹ which, incidentally, resembles the glossary that is appended to Ælfric's *Excerptiones*.

Sometimes the Latin term is translated into Old Norse and Old English, but there is no cognate in the Old Norse for the Old English word, or the Old Norse cognate has a different meaning: ON *grein* 'distinction, separation' vs. OE *tōdāl* (= Lat. *distinctio*); ON *hljóðsgrein* 'sound-distinction' vs. OE *swēg* 'sound, tone' (= Lat. *accentus*); ON *skipan* 'arrangement, order' vs. OE *endebyrdnys* (= Lat. *ordo*); ON *gerð* 'action being accomplished' vs. OE *weorc, dædlic* 'deed, active' (= Lat. *actio*); ON *mynd* 'figure, form' vs. OE *hīw* (= Lat. *figura*); ON *pining* 'torment, torture, suffering' vs. OE *brōwunge, brōwigendlic* (= Lat. *passio*). The most interesting Old English vocabulary items are the calques on Latin compounds or phrases that were most likely created by Ælfric himself.⁴² When a corresponding term is attested in Old Norse it is usually formed in the same way as in Old English:

sometimes overlap. See also Tryggvi Gíslason, 'Íslenzk málfræðiheiti miðalda', pp. 130–37. In the following, English translations have been provided after the ON terms, but not after the OE if the ON and the OE terms can be translated in the same way.

⁴⁰ Ælfric's *Excerptiones* gives *fyll* only once (91), otherwise he uses *declinung, gebigednes*, or *casus* to denote 'case'.

⁴¹ In GKS 1812 IV 4°; see Hugo Gering, 'Isländische Glossen', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 9 (1878), 385–94 (p. 388).

⁴² See Williams, 'Ælfric's Grammatical Terminology', p. 457; Law, 'Anglo-Saxon England', pp. 62–63.

(2) Calques on Latin compounds or phrases

ON	OE	Lat.
eiginligt nafn 'own name'	āgennama	nomen proprium
einfaldig tala 'one-fold number'	ānfeald (getel)	singularis
fyrirsetning 'fore-set-ing'	foresetnys	praepositio
gæfiligt fall 'giving case'	forgyfundlic	dativus
hvílgleikr 'quality' lit. 'whichness'	hwylcnys	qualitas
margfaldig tala 'manyfold number'	menigfeald (getel)	pluralis
nefniligt fall 'naming case'	nemniendlic	nominativus
rægiligt fall 'accusing case'	wrēgendlic	accusativus

In some cases, the Old Norse and the Old English translate the individual parts of the compounds or phrases in the same way, but there is a lack of cognates for one part of the compound or phrase: ON *hálfraddarstafr* 'half-voice-letter' vs. OE *healfclypiend* 'half-vowel' (= Lat. *semivocalis*); ON *meðalorpnig* 'between-throwing' vs. OE *betwuxāworpenys* (= Lat. *interiectio*); ON *tvíhljóðr* 'twice-sounding' vs. OE *twýfeald swēg* 'twofold sound' (= Lat. *diphthongus*).

In other instances, the Latin compounds or phrases are translated in the same way, but there are no cognates in Old Norse for the Old English words, or there has been a change of meaning: ON *hluttekning* 'part-taking' vs. OE *dālnimend* (= Lat. *participium*); ON *hvárginligt kyn* 'neither gender' vs. OE *nāðor cynn* (= Lat. *neutrum*); ON *karlmannligt kyn* 'manly gender' vs. OE *werlic cynn* (= Lat. *masculinum*); ON *sameiginligt nafn* 'common name' vs. OE *gemānlic* (= Lat. *nomen appellativus*); ON *samjafnan* 'compared together' vs. OE *wiðmetenlic* (= Lat. *comparatio*); ON *samokan* 'yoked together' vs. OE *geþēodnys* 'conjugation' (= Lat. *coniugatio*); ON *samtenging* 'joining together' vs. OE *geþēodnys, fēging* 'conjunction, joining' (= Lat. *coniunctio*); ON *tilfelli* 'occurrence' vs. OE *gelimp* (= Lat. *accidens*).

In Old Norse, this grammatical vocabulary is unattested prior to *The Third Grammatical Treatise*. Although we cannot discount the possibility that the Icelandic calques were independent of the Old English, it is difficult to see how two grammarians independently could come up with such tortured expressions as 'throwing between' for *interiectio* and 'neither gender' for *neutrum*. It seems, then, that the Old Norse grammatical vocabulary used by Óláfr in *The Third Grammatical Treatise* was greatly indebted to Ælfric's Old English terminology. We know that Ælfric's *De falsis diis* found its way to Iceland and was translated into Old Norse in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century,⁴³ and there are

⁴³ Arnold Taylor, 'Hauksbók and Ælfric's *De Falsis Diis*', *Leeds Studies in English*, n.s., 3 (1969), 101–09; Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*, pp. 123 n. 34, 157.

no reasons why a version of Ælfric's *Excerptiones* (or, more likely, parts of it) should not have been brought to Iceland by an Icelander studying in England. The last section of this study will show that this was indeed the case.

AM 921 III 4° and Ælfric's Excerptiones

A fragment of an Icelandic manuscript, now labelled AM 921 III 4°, contains a grammatical exercise that must have been used to teach Latin in Icelandic schools. AM 921 III 4° is dated to around 1400, but the language shows that it is a copy of an earlier manuscript.⁴⁴ Björn M. Ólsen, who printed the text as a supplement to his 1884 editions of *The Third Grammatical Treatise* and *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*, drew attention to the fact that the fragment bears a strong resemblance to Ælfric's *Excerptiones* because of its mixture of Latin and the vernacular.⁴⁵ However, as the excerpt below shows, the fragment is an exact copy of the section in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* that teaches the inflections of the verb *amo* 'love':⁴⁶

⁴⁴ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, p. xlv; Kristian Kålund, *Katalog over den Arnemagnæanske håndskriftsamling*, 2 vols (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1888–94), II, 263.

⁴⁵ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, p. xlv.

⁴⁶ The excerpt from AM 921 III 4° is taken from *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, p. 157 (line numbers added) and the corresponding passage from Ælfric's *Excerptiones* is found on pp. 132–33. The sections can be translated as follows: '*amaretis*, you may begin to love, *amarent*, they may begin to love *preterito plusquam perfecto*, in passed tense and more than fully completed, *utinam amavissem*, may God grant that I had loved, *amavisses*, you had loved, *amavisset*, he had loved; *et pluraliter*, and in the plural, *utinam amuissemus*, may God grant that we had loved, *amavissetis*, you had loved, *amauissent*, they had loved. *Futuro*, in un-happened tense *utinam amem*, may God grant that I shall be able to love, *ames*, you will be able to love, *amet*, he shall be able to love; *et pluraliter*, and in the plural, *utinam amemus*, may God grant that we shall be able to love, *ametis*, you will be able to love, *ament*, they will be able to love. *Coniunctiuo modo*, with 'conjoining' mood, *praesenti tempore*, in close-lying tense, *cum amem*, while I may love, *ames*, you may love, *amet*, he may love; *et pluraliter*, and in the plural, *utinam amemus*, while we may love, *ametis*, you may love, *ament* they may love. *Preterito imperfecto*, in passed tense and uncompleted, *cum amem*, while I may begin to love, *amares*, you may begin to love, *amaret* [...] (AM 921 III 4°); '*utinam amaretis*, would that you loved, *utinam amarent*, would that they loved, *eodem modo tempore praeterito perfecto et plusquam perfecto utinam amavissem*, would that I loved completely or distantly, *utinam amavisses* would that you loved, *utinam amavisset* would that he loved; *et pluraliter*, *utinam amavissemus* would that we loved, *utinam amavissetis* would that you loved, *utinam amavissent* would that they loved. *Eodem modo tempore futuro utinam amem*, may God grant that I love still, *utinam ames* that you love, *ames* that he loves; *et pluraliter utinam*

(3) AM 921 III 4° and Ælfric's *Excerptiones*

- i. AMARETIS, þer tekitt til elska, AMARENT, þeir tæke til elska. [921]
utinam amaretis ēalā gif gē lufedon, *utinam amarent*, ēalā gif hī lufodon.
[*Excerptiones*]
- ii. PRETERITO PLUSQUAM PERFECTO, æ lidnum tíma ok framað enn fulloknum,
EODEM MODO TEMPORE PRAETERITO PERFECTO ET PLVSQVAM PERFECTO
- iii. VTINAM AMAVISSEM, gefe gud ek hefde elskat, AMAVISSES,
utinam amauissem ēalā gif ic lufode fulfremedlice oððe gefyrn, *utinam amauisses*
- iv. þu hefder elskath, AMAVISSET, hann hefde elskat; ET PLURALITER, ok margfalliga,
ēalā gif ðū lufodest, *utinam amauisset* ēalā gif hē lufode; ET PLVRALITER,
- v. VTINAM AMUISSEMUS, gefe gud ver hefdím elskat, AMAVISSETIS, þer hefdith
utinam amauissemus ēalā gif wē lufodon, *utinam amauissetis* ēalā gif gē
- vi. elskat, AMAUISSENT, þeir hefde elskat. FUTURO, au-uordnum tíma,
lufodon, *utinam amauissent* ēalā gif hī lufodon. EODEM MODO TEMPORE FVTURO
- vii. VTINAM AMEM, gefe gud ek skyle elska, AMES, þu skyler elska,
utinam amem, forgife god, þæt ic lufige gyt, *utinam ames* þæt ðū lufige,
- viii. AMET, hann skyle elska; ET PLURALITER, ok margfalldliga, VTINAM AMEMUS,
amet þæt hē lufige; ET PLVRALITER *utinam amemus*
- ix. gefe gud ver skylím elska, AMETIS, þier skylit elska, AMENT, þeir skulu elska.
forgyfe god, þæt wē lufion gyt, *ametis* þæt gē lufion, *ament* þæt hī lufion.
- x. CONIUNCTIVO MODO, með samteingiligum hette, PRESENTI TEMPORE,
SVBIUNCTIVO MODO underðeodendlicum gemete, TEMPORE PRAESENTI
- xi. anælegum tíma, CUM AMEM, meðan ek elske, AMES, þu elsker,
cum amem, þonne ic nū lufige, *cum ames* þonne ðū lufast,
- xii. AMET, hann elske; ET PLURALITER, ok margfalldliga, CUM AMEMUS,
cum amet þonne hē lufað; ET PLVRALITER *cum amemus*
- xiii. meðan ver elskím, AMETIS, þer elskit, AMENT þeir elske.
ðonne wē nū lufiað, *cum ametis* þonne gē lufiað, *cum ament* þonne hī lufiað.
- xiv. PRETERITO IMPERFECTO, a lidnum tíma ok oloknum, CUM AMAREM,
EODEM MODO TEMPORE PRAETERITO IMPERFECTO *cum amarem*

amemus may God grant that we love still, *ametis* that you love, *ament* that they love. *Subiunctivo modo* subjunctive mood, *tempore praesenti*, *cum amem*, while I now love, *cum ames* while you love, *cum amet* while he loves, *et pluraliter cum amemus* while we now love, *cum ametis* while you love, *cum ament* while they love. *Eodem modo temporibus praeterito imperfecto cum amarem* when I loved slightly, *cum amares* when you loved, *cum amaret* [. . .]' (Ælfric's *Excerptiones* 132–33).

- xv. medan ek teke til elska, AMARES, þu tæker til elska, AMARET [...]
 þā ðā ic lufode hwæt hwega, *cum amares* ðā ðā ðū lufodest, *cum amaret* [...]

It is clear that the Icelandic text is a direct translation of the corresponding section in Ælfric's grammar, with the Old English vernacular terms translated into Old Norse. The Icelandic fragment even preserves Ælfric's rendering of the optative (cf. line vii): 'forgife god, þæt ic lufige gyt' ('may God grant that I love still'); 'gefe gud ek skyle elska' ('may God grant that I shall be able to love'). The only difference is that, whereas Ælfric's *Excerptiones* translates the Latin *subiunctivus* 'subjunctive' (*underþēodendlic*), the Old Norse text translates *coniunctivus* 'conjunctive' (*samtengiligr*) (see (4) below). Otherwise, the vernacular vocabulary in the two texts is identical and follows the same patterns of loan translation as is found in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*. Consider the following terms:

(4) Common grammatical terms in Ælfric's *Excerptiones* and AM 921 III 4°

ON	OE	Lat.
nálægr tími 'close-lying time'	andwerd tīd 'present time'	praes. tempus
liðinn tími 'passed time'	forðgewiten tīd/tīma 'passed time'	praet. tempus
ó(v)orðinn tími 'un-happened time'	tōwerd tīd 'impending time'	futurum tempus
liðinn tími ok lokinn 'passed time and completed'	forðgewiten fulfremed 'passed completed'	praet. perfectum
liðinn tími ok ólokinn 'passed time and uncompleted'	unfulfremed forðgewiten 'uncompleted passed'	praet. imperfectum
liðinn tími ok framar en fulllokinn 'passed time and more than fully completed'	forðgewiten mære þonne fulfremed 'passed more than completed'	praet. plusq.
boðligr 'commanding'	bebēodendlic 'commanding'	imperativus
æskiligr 'desirable'	gewiscendlic 'desirable'	optativus
samtengiligr 'together joining'	underþēodendlic 'under-joining'	coniunctivus subiunctivus
margfaldliga (adv) 'manyfoldly'	menigfealde (adv) 'manyfoldly'	pluraliter

When there are Old Norse cognate words for the Old English terms, the Old Norse opts to follow the Old English: OE *bebēodendlic*, ON *boðligr* 'commanding'

(= Lat. *imperativus*); OE *gewīscendlic*, ON *æskiligr* ‘desirable’ (= Lat. *optativus*); OE *menigfealde*, ON *margfaldliga* ‘manyfoldly’ (= Lat. *pluraliter*). If there are no cognates, the Old Norse text follows the same patterns of loan-translation and calque on the Latin as the Old English text. Thus there can be no doubt that Ælfric’s *Excerptiones* was known in Iceland, and that parts of it, including the grammatical vocabulary, were used and adapted to Icelandic conditions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, or even earlier.

Conclusion

In this study I hope to have shown the influence of Ælfric’s *Excerptiones* in medieval Iceland. Although we cannot establish beyond doubt that this grammar was one of the direct sources of the prose in Óláfr Þórðarson’s *Treatise*, the correspondences between the grammatical vocabulary used by Óláfr and the grammatical terminology of Ælfric are so close that Óláfr must have been familiar with Ælfric’s work in some form. Furthermore, the circulation of Ælfric’s *Excerptiones* or parts of that grammar in Iceland long after it had ceased to be used in England is confirmed by the fragment AM 921 III 4°. It is unlikely that a copy or copies of the entire Ælfric’s *Excerptiones* found their way to Iceland; rather, following Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*, I would like to suggest that Ælfric’s work must have been known in Iceland in the form of lecture notes, glosses, or material that was adopted and adapted for use in Icelandic classrooms.

In later years, Old English scholars have come to appreciate increasingly the ‘independent, self-explanatory, and economical system’ of grammatical terms invented by Ælfric.⁴⁷ As one scholar puts it: ‘Had it not been for the Conquest we should probably still be using Ælfric’s grammatical vocabulary’.⁴⁸ As (5) below shows, many of the Icelandic equivalents of that terminology are still alive and kicking in Iceland today although, thankfully, such unwieldy constructions as *liðinn tími ok framaren fulllokinn* ‘passed time and more than fully completed’ for ‘plusquamperfectum’ have lost their currency (if they ever had one).

⁴⁷ Williams, ‘Ælfric’s Grammatical Terminology’, p. 454.

⁴⁸ Sawles Warde: *An Early Middle English Homily Edited from the Bodley, Royal and Cotton Mss*, ed. by R. M. Wilson, Leeds School of English Language Texts and Monographs, 3 (Leeds: Titus Wilson, 1938), p. vi.

(5) Modern Icelandic grammatical terminology

Mod. Icel.	OE	
stafur	staf	letter
samhljóði	samod swēgend	consonant
tvíhljóði	twýfeald swēg	diphthong
eignnafn	āgennama	proper noun
nafnorð	nama	noun
kyn	cynn	gender
fall	fyll	case
nefnifall	nemniendlic	nominative
eignarfall	geāgendlic	genitive
tala	getel	number
eintala	ānfeald (getel)	singular
tíð	tīd	tense
boðháttr	bebēodenlic	imperative
forsetning	foresetnys	preposition

OLD ICELANDIC GRAMMATICAL LITERATURE: THE LAST TWO DECADES OF RESEARCH (1983–2005)

Fabrizio D. Raschellà

A state-of-the-art report on Old Icelandic grammatical literature (hereafter OIGL)¹ appeared under the present writer's name in the German journal *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* about twenty years ago.² Since that time a large amount of research has been carried out on this subject and a considerable number of studies have correspondingly been published. It therefore seemed to me appropriate, when I was invited to make a contribution to this volume in honour of Margaret Clunies Ross, who in recent years has been so engaged in investigating the role of grammatical and rhetorical studies in the context of the Old Icelandic poetic tradition, to take the opportunity to present an up-to-date outline of the main developments that have occurred in this branch of Old Norse-Icelandic studies during this period.³ It goes without saying, however, that the space is far from sufficient to touch on all relevant points: the subject matter is in fact too vast and variegated to be reasonably epitomized in so few pages. I shall

¹ The following abbreviations, variously combined, will be used throughout this article: G for 'grammatical'; L for 'literature'; OI for 'Old Icelandic'; T(s) for 'treatise(s)'. The individual Old Icelandic grammatical works will be abbreviated as *FiGT* (*First Grammatical Treatise*), *SGT* (*Second Grammatical Treatise*), *ThGT* (*Third Grammatical Treatise*), and *FoGT* (*Fourth Grammatical Treatise*).

² Raschellà 1983 (author-date references are used in this chapter where the work appears in the appended bibliography).

³ A preliminary version of this paper was presented in oral form at the Twelfth International Saga Conference (Bonn) in August 2003. Among the people who took part in the following discussion was Margaret Clunies Ross herself, to whom I wish to renew here my gratitude for useful remarks and suggestions.

therefore have to be selective, and some studies will inevitably receive less consideration than they might deserve and others will not be commented on at all. While I apologize for such necessary omissions, I endeavour to do justice, at least in part, to these works by including them in the bibliographical list at the end of this paper, which aims at being as exhaustive as possible.⁴

In light of this, it seems reasonable to start the discussion with an account of the general surveys of OIGL that have been written in the period we are concerned with. The first to be published after Raschellà's report in 1983 appears to be an article by Jurij K. Kusmenko which appeared in a Russian miscellany on the history of medieval linguistic doctrines in 1985.⁵ Unfortunately, I have not as yet been able to see this article and, even if I had, I would not have the necessary linguistic competence to read it, but I presume that its content may, in part at least, have flowed into a later study published by Kusmenko in 1993 in the German periodical *Skandinavistik* with the title 'Einige Bemerkungen zu den altisländischen grammatischen Abhandlungen', which I will discuss in some detail further on.

In 1987 Even Hovdhaugen published an article entitled 'The First Vernacular Grammars in Europe: The Scandinavian Area' in issue no. 9 of the French journal *Histoire Épistémologie Langage* (entirely devoted to the earliest grammatical works in the European vernaculars).⁶ As the title clearly suggests, Hovdhaugen's article embraces the *whole* Scandinavian area. Therefore only a small part of it is devoted to Icelandic grammatical literature (both medieval and early modern) and is no more than an essential informative sketch. Hovdhaugen uses, among other things, the term 'grammar' in a very narrow and rather modern sense, which entitles him to assert that 'the Icelandic scholars [of the Middle Ages] seem to have been rather uninterested in writing a grammar of their own language'.⁷ After some general remarks on the analogies of OIGL with contemporary Irish and Provençal material, Hovdhaugen quickly goes on to consider Runólfur Jónsson's *Grammaticae Islandicae rudimenta* (written in 1651), reserving the rest of his attention to the modern period.

⁴ Even so, the list tends to include only those works, or parts of works, that have a direct bearing on the subject at hand. There are in fact a number of investigations of adjacent or more comprehensive subjects (especially works on the history of the Icelandic language and/or literature) which contain occasional references to one or more OI grammatical works but which have not been included in the list.

⁵ Kusmenko 1985.

⁶ Hovdhaugen 1987.

⁷ Hovdhaugen 1987, p. 74.

The year 1988 saw the publication of volume XI of Strayer's *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, which contains an essential survey of the Scandinavian grammatical literature by Einar Haugen.⁸ In just a few lines, the great master of Scandinavian language history gives us an effective picture of the OI grammatical writings. As is to be expected, given his previous contributions to this field of research and his pre-eminently linguistic concern, the balance of Haugen's treatment is slightly displaced towards the *FiGT*;⁹ moreover, the author makes a point of stressing the close connections between grammatical studies in Iceland and in other European countries during the Middle Ages.

As mentioned above, the Russian linguist Jurij K. Kusmenko — for many years active in German universities — published an article in 1993 in which he points out some prominent features of the OIGTs, especially of the *FiGT* and *ThGT*.¹⁰ Kusmenko seems here to be mainly concerned to compare the different opinions that scholars have expressed over the course of time about the origin and the distinctiveness of the GTs. Even keeping one's distance from the harsh criticism uttered against Kusmenko's views — especially concerning the *ThGT* — by Bjarne Ulvestad two years later,¹¹ it must be admitted that Kusmenko's article contains a number of statements and inferences that may objectively appear surprising. In particular, he takes up again the old dispute about the attribution of the passage on runic writing in the *ThGT* to the eleventh-century Icelandic master of runes Þóroddr Gamlason — an attribution that would put back the date of the passage relative to the rest of the Icelandic grammatical tradition. In doing this, he brings back the terms of reference to exactly the same point at which Björn M. Ólsen had left them in 1883,¹² irrespective of later criticism.¹³ An

⁸ Haugen 1988.

⁹ It is hardly necessary to be reminded that we owe to Haugen the first separate edition and thorough commentary of the *FiGT*, originally published in 1950 and reprinted with revisions in 1972 (*The First Grammatical Treatise: The Earliest Germanic Phonology*, ed. by Einar Haugen, 2nd rev. edn (London: Longman, 1972)).

¹⁰ Kusmenko 1993.

¹¹ Ulvestad 1995.

¹² Björn M. Ólsen, *Runerne i den oldislandske litteratur*, ed. by Kommissionen for det Arnemagnæanske Legat (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1883), pp. 44–80; cf. also *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske afhandling i Snorres Edda tilligemed de grammatiske afhandlingers prolog og to andre tilleg*, ed. by Björn M. Ólsen, Samfund til udgivelse af gammel nordisk litteratur, 12 (Copenhagen: Knudtzon, 1884), pp. xxiii–xxv.

¹³ See, in particular, Finnur Jónsson, *Den oldnorske og oldislandske litteraturs historie*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Copenhagen: Gad, 1920–24), II (1923), 922, and Óláfr Þórðarson *málhljóða- og*

evident misinterpretation of the passage on the names of vowel runes, for instance, leads Kusmenko to establish a direct connection between the *ThGT* and the *FiGT* that probably never existed.¹⁴ On the other hand, Kusmenko's view, shared by most Old Norse scholars, of the close ties between the OI grammatical tradition and the theoretical foundations of skaldic poetry is beyond dispute.

Of an essentially descriptive and informative character, yet accurate and well-documented, is the survey of OI GL presented by Magnús Snædal at the '7. Rask-ráðstefna', a seminar on early Icelandic grammatical studies held in Reykjavík under the auspices of Íslenska málfræðifélagið in 1994, and published, together with the other papers delivered at the seminar, in issue no. 15 of the journal *Íslensk mál og almenn málfræði*.¹⁵

In 1993 and 1996 two lexicon entries on the OIGTs appeared in Pulsiano's *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia* and in Stammerjohann's *Lexicon grammaticorum*, respectively. The former was written by Fabrizio D. Raschellà and the latter by Federico Albano Leoni.¹⁶ Another lexicon article was published in 1998 by the German linguist Kurt Braunmüller in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*.¹⁷ Braunmüller's treatment has a more far-reaching scope than the works previously mentioned and aims at covering the whole Germanic area, in that it considers all those products of grammatical learning 'die in einer germ. Sprache abgefaßt sind oder die (auf Lat. verfaßt) einen Aspekt einer germanischen Sprache behandeln' ('which are composed in a Germanic language or which, although composed in Latin, treat an aspect of a Germanic language').¹⁸ Even in this perspective, however, the North Germanic documentary evidence holds a prominent position and is opposed, as such, to that deriving from the 'West Germanic' area, which shows an incomparably poorer and more fragmentary picture. On the other hand, it should be noted that Braunmüller's attention in regard to the North Germanic area is almost exclusively devoted to the *FiGT* and *SGT*, the only ones

málskrúðsrit: Grammatisk-retorisk afhandling, ed. by Finnur Jónsson, Det kgl. danske videnskabernes selskab, Historisk-filologiske meddelelser, XIII, 2 (Copenhagen: Høst, 1927), pp. 15–16.

¹⁴ Kusmenko 1993, p. 90.

¹⁵ Magnús Snædal 1993. The seminar proceedings (pp. 121–240) include, besides Snædal's contribution, articles by Guðrún Kvaran, Gunnar Harðarson, Jan Ragnar Hagland, Kristján Arnason, and Sverrir Tómasson, some of which will be discussed below.

¹⁶ Raschellà 1993; Albano Leoni 1996.

¹⁷ Braunmüller 1998.

¹⁸ Braunmüller 1998, p. 573. An article with similar characteristics was published in 1984 by the present writer in an Italian journal of Germanic studies (Raschellà 1984).

which would testify to the existence of ‘strukturelle Denk- und Analysemethoden unabhängig von der herrschenden grammatischen Tradition der Spätant[ike]’ (‘structural methods of thought and analysis independent of the dominant grammatical tradition of late antiquity’), while the *ThGT* and *FoGT* are stigmatized as mere ‘konventionelle Bearbeitungen lat. grammatischer Werke’ (‘conventional adaptations of Latin grammatical works’).¹⁹ In brief, therefore, Braunmüller reaffirms the substantially original character of the *FiGT* and *SGT* and their foreshadowing of some of the principles of modern structural phonological analysis.

We thus come to the last general treatment of OIGL published so far, that by Valeria Micillo, which appeared in the year 2000 in volume XVIII of the monumental de Gruyter series *Handbücher zur Sprach- und Kommunikationswissenschaft*, devoted to the history of language sciences.²⁰ In spite of its delimitative and somewhat misleading title, ‘The Latin Tradition and Icelandic’, Micillo’s work is in fact a complete and accurate, though summary, treatment of the fundamental aspects of OIGL. The author’s attention is particularly directed towards the theoretical foundations of the GTs, which she concisely but carefully accounts for throughout the work.

To conclude with the general surveys of OIGL, two more contributions should be mentioned, which are included in larger works on Old Norse-Icelandic literature as a whole. One is by Sverrir Tómasson, the author of the chapter on the Trivium arts in the first volume of *Íslensk bókmenntasaga* published under the imprint of Mál og Menning;²¹ the other is contained in the chapter ‘Rhetoric and Style’ which Þórir Óskarsson wrote for the recent handbook on Old Norse literature and culture edited by Rory McTurk.²²

Let us now have a look at works dealing with the individual OIGTs. In presenting these works, I will follow the established order of the treatises, which principally originates from their sequence in Codex Wormianus (AM 242 fol) of Snorri’s *Edda*.²³

¹⁹ Braunmüller 1998, p. 577.

²⁰ Micillo 2000.

²¹ Sverrir Tómasson 1992.

²² Þórir Óskarsson 2005, pp. 355–58.

²³ For a discussion of the presumable chronological order of the treatises, I take the liberty to refer to my article from 1983 (see note 2 above), pp. 306–15, as well as to the commentary following my edition of the *SGT* (*The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà, *Filologia Germanica*, Testi e Studi, 2 (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1982)), pp. 126–32. Besides, it should be noted that the

Between the years 1985 and 2005 a dozen articles were published on matters specifically concerning *The First Grammatical Treatise*. Leaving aside the long-lasting — and often specious — dispute about the degree of originality and independence of the *FiGT* with respect to Latin tradition, which has seen the opposing parties in dispute even in recent times,²⁴ I would like to begin by mentioning two articles by Jan Ragnar Hagland.²⁵ Both works deal with an aspect of Icelandic grammatical literature in the Middle Ages which, in my opinion, is of paramount importance for a better understanding and a correct evaluation of the relationship between the Icelandic and the Latin grammatical tradition: the existence, in medieval Iceland (at least until the end of the thirteenth century), of a ‘digrafisk skriftspråkssituasjon’ (‘digraphic literary situation’),²⁶ which led to a fruitful interference between two literary cultures (‘skriftspråkskulturar’²⁷), each of which referred to a different writing system, that is, the runic one and the Latin one, the former assuring the preservation of the indigenous grammatical tradition and the latter providing the means of acquisition of the new cultural requirements coming with ever-increasing influence from continental Europe. In fact, an attentive consideration of this point might, among other things, curb the persistent and largely unjustified interpretative tension that characterizes this aspect of research on OIGL and particularly on the *FiGT*, as Hagland himself has tried to demonstrate.²⁸ In a third, more recent article Hagland investigates the *FiGT* as a source of evidence of possible connections between runic literacy and skaldic poetry.²⁹ Starting from the observation that, on more than one occasion, the First Gram-

so-called ‘Fifth Grammatical Treatise’ — a small manuscript fragment originally belonging to a treatise on skaldic rhetorical figures contained in the codex AM 748 I b 4^o — will not be taken into consideration; on the other hand, no specific study has been devoted to it, as far as I know, in the last two decades.

²⁴ See, for example, the controversy between Jurij K. Kusmenko and Bjarne Ulvestad referred to above. In this connection, two more articles, one written by Harry Perridon and the other by E. F. K. Koerner (Perridon 1985; Koerner 1997), should be mentioned, both rejecting the interpretation of the ‘First Grammarian’ as a forerunner of modern structural phonology, as expressed, for example, in the works of Einar Haugen and Hreinn Benediktsson.

²⁵ Hagland 1992 and 1993.

²⁶ Hagland 1993, p. 165.

²⁷ Hagland 1993, p. 162.

²⁸ Closely connected to this subject, though not explicitly mentioning OIGL, is a later article by Hagland on the diffusion of runic literacy in medieval Iceland (Hagland 1996). The same aspect has been treated with reference to the *ThGT* by Karin F. Seim (see below for discussion).

²⁹ Hagland 2005.

marian avails himself of skaldic verses to illustrate and substantiate his treatment of Icelandic orthography, much in the same way as Latin grammarians resorted to the authority of poets of their own tradition, and that part of his technical terminology is arguably drawn from both skaldic and runic usage, Hagland suggests that skalds might have had some skill in runic writing and, consequently, be bearers of metalinguistic competence in the context of runic literacy. This seems to fit particularly well with the word *rýnni*, a typically poetic term which is used by the author of the *FiGT* in the general meaning of 'writing' and which in all likelihood has its starting point in the word *rún*.³⁰

A specialized yet nonetheless important issue concerning the introductory section of the *FiGT* has been debated by Gunnar Harðarson and, again, by Jan Ragnar Hagland in recent years.³¹ The former raises the question of how to interpret the well-known passage in which the author of the treatise states that 'we [Icelanders and Englishmen] are of one tongue' and, through a series of reasonable arguments, comes to the conclusion that the language referred to is most likely to be identified with that which, according to the Prologue to Snorri's *Edda*, was introduced into Northern Europe by the Æsir and spread throughout Scandinavia as well as to Saxony (and, from there, to England in later times). Some perplexity has been expressed on this point by Hagland, who deems it possible that these words of the First Grammarian may just be the echo of a 'literary topos', for which analogues can be found in several works of Old Norse literature, with no actual linguistic implications.

The *FiGT* as a source of cultural history of twelfth-century Iceland is the central subject of an article written by Sverrir Tómasson nearly two decades ago.³² The author, espousing a view originally expressed by Einar Haugen,³³ maintains that the treatise is a refined intellectual piece of work, written by a learned man for his fellow scholars and not, as one might think, meant for school teaching. He further speculates about which Latin works, if any, may have inspired the First Grammarian's theoretical approach to orthography and formulates hypotheses about the places abroad where he may have received his scholarly education.

³⁰ The meaning currently attributed to *rýnni* in contexts of Old Norse poetry is 'runic lore', 'knowledge of runes', and 'knowledge' in general (cf. Sveinbjörn Egilsson, *Lexicon poeticum antiquæ linguae septentrionalis: Ordbog over det norsk-islandske skjaldesprog*, rev. by Finnur Jónsson, 2nd edn (Copenhagen: Møller, 1931), p. 474, where it is translated into Danish as *runeforskning*, *runekundskab*, and *kundskab i alm[indelighed]*).

³¹ Gunnar Harðarson 1999; Hagland 2000.

³² Sverrir Tómasson 1988a.

³³ *First Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Haugen, pp. 5–6.

Finally, mention should be made of a Swedish translation of the *FiGT* published in 2002 as the collective work of a group of researchers at the University of Göteborg.³⁴

Research on *The Second Grammatical Treatise* in the period under consideration is definitely dominated by the works of Kurt Braunmüller, who, in the early 1980s, elaborated his theory about the treatise's main concern, which, in his opinion, consists of defining the fundamental features of sound distribution (*Lautdistribution*) and of syllabic structure (*Silbenbau*) in contemporary Icelandic.³⁵ These are in fact, Braunmüller argues, the necessary premises to a conscious knowledge of skaldic versification, especially for the realization of correct *hendingar*, a term which in skaldic terminology denotes the combinations of vowels with the following consonant(s) in a rhyming syllable. According to Braunmüller, who maintains Oskar Brenner's and Eugen Mogk's view,³⁶ this would, among other things, explain the placing of the treatise just before *Háttatal* in the Codex Upsaliensis (DG 11) of Snorri's *Edda*, one of the two manuscripts in which the treatise is handed down. On this basis Braunmüller resolutely criticizes the interpretation of the *SGT*, given by Raschellà, as a *pre-eminently* (not 'exclusively', as he would claim)³⁷ orthographic work.³⁸ I must admit that the position I took towards the nature of the *SGT* in this early work might appear rather stiff and intransigent, yet that of

³⁴ Kristinn Jóhannesson and others 2002. The translation is preceded by a short introduction with essential information about the manuscript, the content of the treatise, and the editorial principles applied by the authors.

³⁵ Braunmüller 1983a, 1984, and 1986 (especially pp. 59–62).

³⁶ Oskar Brenner, 'Der traktat der Upsala-Edda "af setningu hattalykils"', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 21 (1888), 272–80; Eugen Mogk, 'Untersuchungen zur Snorra-Edda. I. Der sogenannte zweite grammatische traktat der Snorra-Edda', *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie*, 22 (1889), 129–67, also published as Eugen Mogk, *Der sogenannte zweite grammatische traktat der Snorra-Edda: Einleitung, Text, Übersetzung*, Habilitationsschrift, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Leipzig (Halle: Buchdruckerei des Waisenhauses, 1889).

³⁷ '(lediglich als) eine rein orthographische Abhandlung'; Braunmüller 1983b, p. 56, and 1986, p. 77.

³⁸ Compare *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, ed. by Raschellà, p. 10. Braunmüller's position has been supported by Thomas Krömmelbein (Krömmelbein 1992, p. 117). In this connection, it may perhaps be mentioned that a fully positive evaluation of Raschellà's analysis of the *SGT* was expressed by another eminent reviewer, Einar Haugen (Haugen 1984). A substantial contribution to the discussion about the nature and the aim of the *SGT* has also been given by Kristján Árnason in his review of Raschellà's work (1984).

Braunmüller certainly was no less so then and still is today, judging from his latest writings on this matter.³⁹ I am now willing to acknowledge that some insight into the distribution and combination of *letters* (rather than ‘sounds’) may have been inspired in the author of the *SGT* by his knowledge — maybe by his creative experience, too — of skaldic versification; but I still hold the firm conviction that the treatise was written *chiefly* with the purpose of reordering Icelandic writing and, after a long period of orthographic inconsistency and inadequacy, making it conform to the general phonological situation of his times. The other possible achievements of the treatise are most probably the unwitting, though remarkable, consequence of its author’s diligent orthographic concern and keen linguistic observation.

Besides Braunmüller’s investigations and some reviews of Raschellà’s edition of the *SGT*, only one more study, an article by the Italian scholar Lucio Melazzo, seems to have been specifically devoted to this treatise in the period under consideration.⁴⁰ Melazzo attempts to identify the possible sources of the opening section of the treatise, concerned with a classification of the different kinds of sounds and voices occurring in nature, which is most likely a reiteration of a rather widespread proposition found in Latin grammatical literature. He quotes, compares, and meticulously comments on a number of passages taken from the works of classical and medieval authors (mostly grammarians) where this subject is dealt with, confirming some basic results achieved by Raschellà⁴¹ and adding some new suggestions. Regrettably, his treatment ends, after an extensive discussion of the Latin texts, with no concrete attempt at establishing the actual degree of dependence of this passage in the *SGT* on one or the other of the texts mentioned in the article.

To complete the survey of research work on the *SGT*, another study should be included which is devoted to the two diagrams on letters (a circular and a rectangular figure) found in one of the two manuscripts containing the treatise, the Codex Upsaliensis. This investigation, carried out by the present writer, is included in a co-authored article focussing on the ‘critical edition of images’.⁴² The issue whether and to what extent illustrative figures — occurring especially in

³⁹ I am referring to Braunmüller’s article from 1998, mentioned above, and to another work of his (Braunmüller 1995) which will be discussed later.

⁴⁰ Melazzo 1985.

⁴¹ *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise*, pp. 107–14.

⁴² Busani / Raschellà 2001. The figures in the *SGT* are discussed at pp. 227–37 and represented in the plates at the end of the volume.

manuscripts of technical and scientific concern — are capable of being ‘normalized’ and, if need be, emended to make them consonant with the verbal text referring to them is raised.

After a period of virtual stagnation of more than half a century, research on *The Third Grammatical Treatise* has slowly come to new life beginning in the middle of the 1980s and, at a steady increase, has been especially intensified from the early 1990s, so much so that we can now speak of a veritable rebirth of interest in this treatise, the importance of which has long been obscured by the strong emphasis laid by scholars on the *FiGT* and *SGT* in the second half of the last century. On the other hand, it was hardly conceivable that the major — with regard to both the extensiveness and variety of topics dealt with — *OIGT* would continue to be neglected any longer. As a matter of fact, many a scholar of Old Norse has expressed, in recent years, the urgent need for new critical editions and in-depth investigations of the *ThGT*, especially with regard to its treatment of skaldic verse and its relationship to Latin literary rhetoric.⁴³ Certainly, this is a lack that the *ThGT* shares with the *FoGT*, which immediately follows it in Codex Wormianus of Snorri’s *Edda* as a sort of continuation and completion of its second part. Therefore it is no coincidence that some recent studies devoted to a comprehensive analysis of the theoretical background, both native and Latinate, of the medieval Icelandic *ars poetica* tackle the question, discussing the two treatises in conjunction.⁴⁴ We shall return to this topic, however, after considering a series of studies which have the *ThGT* as their central subject.

Two new critical editions of the *ThGT*, or of one of its parts,⁴⁵ have appeared, during this period, shortly after one another: one is by Thomas Krömmelbein and the other by Tarrin Wills, the latter being an unpublished doctoral dissertation.⁴⁶ The former may not properly be defined a *new* edition, inasmuch as it presents the text of Björn M. Ólsen’s 1884 edition of the treatise practically unchanged. It is accompanied by a short introduction, a parallel German translation (the first of

⁴³ See, for example, Clunies Ross 2005, pp. 234–35.

⁴⁴ I am referring in particular to the extensive monographs of Guðrún Nordal (2001) and Margaret Clunies Ross (2005), which will be discussed below.

⁴⁵ As is well known, the treatise — composed by Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld, Snorri Sturluson’s nephew — consists of two distinct sections, traditionally known by the names of *Málfræðinnar grundvöllr* ‘The Foundation of Grammar’ and *Málskrúðsfræði* ‘The Science of Language Ornamentation’, respectively.

⁴⁶ Krömmelbein 1998; Wills 2001.

its kind), and some essential explanatory notes. Wills's work is an extensive study and a critical edition of the first, properly 'grammatical', part of the treatise (*Málfræðinnar grundvöllr*), which also includes facsimiles and transcription of its four extant manuscript witnesses. It also provides the first complete English translation of this text. Wills's concern in the introductory section of his work and in the commentary is predominantly directed to establishing the role of *Málfræðinnar grundvöllr* in the context of the history of writing and, in particular, of early runological studies in Scandinavia. It will be noticed, among other things, that a new *complete* critical edition of the *ThGT* — or at least of its second part — equipped with a detailed commentary is still lacking.

The value of the *ThGT* or, more exactly, of its second part (*Málskrúðsfræði*), as a theoretical work on skaldic verse-making has been the object of careful examination in works by Margaret Clunies Ross and Judy Quinn. The former, firstly in a monograph devoted to the discussion of Snorri's conception of a vernacular *ars poetica* as emerging from *Skáldskaparmál*,⁴⁷ and then in a recently published volume presenting a general view of Old Norse (mainly skaldic) poetry,⁴⁸ points out the close connections between Óláfr's treatise and Snorri's poetological work. Clunies Ross's main point is that, although Óláfr derived some of his basic views about skaldic poetics as well as part of his technical vocabulary from Snorri, his idea of the nature and the function of poetry's figurative language was considerably different from that of his uncle and more in keeping with Latin rhetorical tradition, especially as represented in Donatus's *Ars maior*. The partially diverging attitude of the two authors towards vernacular poetry is actually corroborated by a comparative analysis of the technical terminology used by each of them, which clearly brings out Óláfr's greater dependence on Latin models.⁴⁹ These very arguments are resumed and discussed in a broader context by Clunies Ross in her recent *History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics*, where Óláfr's work is examined in parallel to the *FoGT*. The wide-ranging scope of her analysis also brings Clunies Ross to include Snorri's writings on Norse poetics, together with the twelfth-century *Háttalykill*, in the category of 'grammatical' works in the broadest sense of the term, to such an extent as to subsume and discuss all of them under the common headings 'The Icelandic grammatical tradition' and 'The grammatical literature'.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Clunies Ross 1987.

⁴⁸ Clunies Ross 2005.

⁴⁹ Clunies Ross 1987, esp. pp. 25–30, 34–38, and 69–77.

⁵⁰ Clunies Ross 2005, pp. 150–56 and 208–09.

But to this point we will come back later. A similar position has been maintained by Judy Quinn in an article on the development of scholarly descriptions of skaldic technique in Iceland between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries.⁵¹ After outlining the main features and different aims of the three cardinal works of medieval Icelandic poetics — *Háttalykill*, *Háttatal*, and *Skáldskaparmál* — and their mutual relations, the author proceeds to a comparative analysis of Snorri's poetological writings and Óláfr's rhetorical treatise, the latter being similar in content to the former but conceived with partially different pedagogical intentions. Quinn argues that a considerable number of poetic concepts and terms used by Óláfr are directly drawn from Snorri's works (especially from *Háttatal*) and that Snorri was the first to apply them and to give them a formal description. Her basic assumption, however, is that, although all of the works mentioned 'draw from a rich source of vernacular nomenclature', some of the concepts expressed by these terms do not appear to have been 'definitively fixed' in skaldic tradition.⁵² Finally, Quinn dwells at some length on the Prologue to the four GTs in Codex Wormianus, observing that this text, presumably written by the same person who compiled the manuscript in the mid-fourteenth century, clearly testifies to the transition from a predominantly oral to an essentially literary, that is, book-based, practice of skaldic art, founded on Christian ideology. This fact seems to be corroborated, among other things, by the coinage of a new term, *eddu list*, used by contemporary authors to refer to Snorri's (and other scholars') literary elaboration of ancient native poetry.

Owing to the presence of the many, for the most part anonymous, skaldic verses used by Óláfr to exemplify and substantiate his treatment of rhetorical figures, the *ThGT* is, of course, also an eminent source of Old Norse-Icelandic poetry. It is precisely from this perspective that it has been studied by, among others, Gísli Sigurðsson, in an article aiming at defining the status of oral poetry in mid-thirteenth-century Iceland.⁵³ Through a close scrutiny of all the verses contained in the treatise and a classification according to their (known or presumable) origin, Gísli arrives at the result that most of the Icelandic verses quoted by Óláfr (the authors of which are known from either Óláfr's information or other sources) belong to skaldic oral tradition and were composed by poets native

⁵¹ Quinn 1994.

⁵² Quinn 1994, p. 86.

⁵³ Gísli Sigurðsson 2000. An earlier, Icelandic version of this article was published in the preprints of the Ninth International Saga Conference, held in Akureyri in 1994.

to the west of Iceland, that is, from the same district as Óláfr and his family, the Sturlungar.⁵⁴

The most popular and frequent subject of investigation concerning the *ThGT* in the last twenty years or so, however, has undoubtedly been the study of its connections with Latin grammatical tradition and, particularly, the search for its possible sources in Latin grammatical works. This is admittedly no surprise considering its numerous and manifold references, both explicit and implicit, to the doctrines of classical and medieval grammarians and rhetoricians.

An early attempt at defining the position of the OI treatises on rhetorical grammar — that is, Óláfr's *Málskrúðsfræði* and the *FoGT* — in the context of medieval works on Icelandic poetics and their relations with Latin rhetoric is to be found in an article by Peter Foote from 1982 (reprinted with a postscript in a collection of writings by the same author in 1984), where the influence exerted by the Latin tradition, especially of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, is confronted with the original contributions of the Icelandic scholars.⁵⁵

Three years after Foote's study, an article was published by Federico Albano Leoni, bearing the witty yet meaningful title 'Donato in Thule', in which the soundness of Óláfr's exemplification and explanation of the Latin rhetorical figures as described in Donatus's *Ars maior* (the only source expressly mentioned by Óláfr) by means of skaldic verses is tested, focussing on the chapter on tropes and metaphors.⁵⁶ The result of the enquiry is that, while some figures (such as *periphrasis*, *allegoria*, and *hyperbole*) are illustrated and described correctly, that is, in full conformity with Donatus's teaching, others (such as *antonomasia*, *epitheton*, and *metaphora*) are less so or are misinterpreted entirely, and that the incongruence is all the more marked and insoluble where the two poetic traditions and sensitivities are more divergent. Albano Leoni concludes therefore by observing that the occasional incompleteness and imperfection of Óláfr's rendering of the Donatian tenets is due to the remarkable distance between the two traditions, that of classical poetry, of a basically Aristotelian matrix, and that of skaldic versification, which has in Snorri its most distinguished theorist.

The relations of the *ThGT* with, on the one hand, Latin grammatical-rhetorical tradition and, on the other hand, an Old Norse-Icelandic theory of vernacular

⁵⁴ It may be useful to mention, in this connection, that a paper on the anonymous verses in the *ThGT* was recently presented by Tarrin Wills at the Thirteenth International Conference (Durham and York, 6–12 August 2006) and published in the conference preprints.

⁵⁵ Foote 1984 (1982).

⁵⁶ Albano Leoni 1985–86.

poetry, especially as represented in Snorri's writings, have also been investigated in works by Carlo Santini, Elena Gurevich, Mats Malm, and Rolf Stavnem. The first mentioned scholar discusses, among other things, Óláfr's treatment of some *vitia* (in particular, *acyrologia* and *amphibologia*) adopting an approach which is very similar to that of his fellow countryman Albano Leoni, yet extending the comparison to other Latin grammarians besides Donatus.⁵⁷ Along much the same lines is Elena Gurevich's study of Óláfr's exemplification of *macrologia*.⁵⁸ Mats Malm and Rolf Stavnem, on the other hand, have broached the complex task of defining the proper value of the term *sannkenning* by comparing the definitions and the examples given of this figure in Óláfr's treatise and Snorri's *Skáldskaparmál* and *Háttatal*, as well as in relation to the Latin tropes *metaphora* and *epitheton*, to which, according to Óláfr, it is supposed to correspond.⁵⁹ Malm's thesis is that *sannkenning* represents for both Óláfr and Snorri a subtype of *kenning* (on a par with *við(r)kenning*, mentioned in *Skáldskaparmál*), and that, contrary to what has often been maintained, Óláfr's exposition of *kenningar* is substantially coherent with respect to both Snorri's statements and the Latin concepts of *metaphora* and *epitheton*. Though sharing some of Malm's points, Stavnem maintains that Óláfr contradicts Snorri as well as parts of his own work, and that the passage in *Málskrúðsfræði* in which *sannkenning* is exemplified by means of definitions of men and gods is probably corrupt and therefore could be emended, for example into *mannkenning*, as some previous scholars have suggested.

There can be little doubt, however, that the most substantial contributions to the research on the Latinate background of the *ThGT* in its entirety have been made by Valeria Micillo.⁶⁰ The important and largely innovative results she has gradually achieved in this field in a period of about ten years are summarized and further defined in a forthcoming study which I have been allowed to utilize for the purpose of this article.⁶¹ In particular, Micillo has been able to pinpoint some significant correspondences between the *ThGT* and the writings of some Irish — or, more exactly, Hiberno-Latin — grammarians who were active in Carolingian centres during the ninth century, as well as with twelfth-century commentaries

⁵⁷ Santini 1994, esp. pp. 42–44.

⁵⁸ Gurevich 2000.

⁵⁹ Malm 1990; Stavnem 2003.

⁶⁰ Micillo 1993, 1995, 1999, and 2000 pp. 621–22.

⁶¹ A preliminary version of the study referred to was presented by Micillo in a paper delivered at the Twelfth International Saga Conference (Bonn) in 2003 but not included in the conference preprints.

on Priscian's *Institutiones grammaticae* and, with regard to the introductory section of the treatise (concerned with a classification of sounds), with the works of some thirteenth-century logicians. Among the first-mentioned writings, the Donatus commentaries by Sedulius Scottus, Murethach, and the anonymous *Ars Laurehamensis* are of particular relevance to the second part of the treatise, while the first part seems to be influenced at some points by the *Summa super Priscianum* of the French grammarian Petrus Helias. As for the opening section, Micillo argues that, besides echoes of Petrus Hispanus's *Summulae logicales* and Roger Bacon's *Summulae dialectices* (already pointed out in works by Fabrizio D. Raschellà and Tarrin Wills), a dependence on the medieval tradition of the *arbor Porphyriana* (so called after the third-century Greek philosopher Porphyrius) is observable. From the above considerations Micillo infers that the author of the *ThGT* did not draw his material directly from Priscian's and Donatus's works, but rather from some of their later commentaries as well as from treatises on logic written by or connected with authors of his time, which he may possibly have reworked and supplemented with some of his own contributions. As is to be expected, the overall influence of Latin grammar is also observable in the technical vocabulary used by the author of the treatise, which in this regard appears to be the most dependent of the OIGTs on Latin models. In 1994, Micillo devoted an entire article to this aspect, comparing the grammatical terms used by Óláfr Þórðarson not only to the corresponding Latin nomenclature, but also to the grammatical terminology documented in other Germanic languages, especially in the *Latin Grammar* of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Ælfric of Eynsham.⁶²

In connection with the technical terminology of the *ThGT*, mention must also be made of a study by Kristján Árnason concerning the use and the actual meaning of the term *hljóðs grein* used by Óláfr as an equivalent of Latin *accentus* or *tenor*, which corresponds to the modern concept of 'tonal accent' or 'pitch'.⁶³ The question is treated by Kristján in conjunction with Snorri's use of the term *grein* in *Háttatal*, yet for our purposes we may limit ourselves to considering only the former. The word in question is obviously used by Óláfr to refer to the distinction — proper to ancient Greek but automatically adopted by Latin grammarians — among acute, grave, and circumflex accents, yet Óláfr's exemplification is made, as is his habit, by means of Icelandic words and even instances of skaldic verses. The issue raised by Kristján is therefore whether Óláfr's statements about the

⁶² Micillo 1994.

⁶³ Kristján Árnason 1984.

presence of different pitch types in Icelandic proceed from a mere adaptation of his Latin sources, as is currently believed, or may bear witness to the actual existence, in medieval Icelandic, of a tonal accent of the same kind as is found in some modern Scandinavian languages. Unfortunately, Óláfr's argumentation in this regard is, as clearly pointed out by the author, far from perspicuous and coherent, and no conclusive assessment of his thought seems possible. Therefore, after much discussion and speculation, the question raised by Kristján remains open; or, better, the presence of distinctive tonal accents in medieval Icelandic appears theoretically possible and tenable but not safely demonstrable.

From what has been observed so far, it appears that the *ThGT* is clearly a valuable source not only for the history of Icelandic literature and culture, but also for linguistic evidence in the broadest sense of the term. From the latter perspective it has also been investigated by the present writer with reference to a passage, contained in the chapter on the attributes of the letters (which also includes a comparison between the Latin and the runic alphabet), in which a statement is made about the properties of the 'diphthongs' in both Latin and Norse (*in norrænu*).⁶⁴ In doing this, the author of the treatise observes that in Norse the diphthong is found, among other things, for reasons of euphony (*fyrir hljóðfegrð*), which happens, for example, in words like *lækr* and *ægr*, and this 'because it seems to sound better than [when the same words are pronounced] *lækr* and *ægr*' (*þvíat fegra þykkir hljóða heldr en lækr, ægr*). Leaving aside any speculation about the alleged euphonic properties of a 'diphthong' (or, for that matter, of any other speech sound), what we learn from this statement by Óláfr is that, in his time, the 'diphthong' (in reality, a long vowel) found in these words could be pronounced in two different ways, that is, [œ:] or [æ:], and that the first pronunciation was, according to him, to be preferred because it sounded more correct or more agreeable. Put into terms of diachronic phonology, the phenomenon referred to by Óláfr shows that the vowel in question was undergoing a change, and that two variants — an earlier ([œ:]) and a more recent one ([æ:]) — coexisted at that time. In other words, Raschellà concludes, we have here an outright confirmation of an important phonological change that took place in mid-thirteenth-century Icelandic, which, beyond Óláfr's direct witness, is only to be inferred from manuscript evidence.

Finally, two studies concerning the chapters of the *ThGT* on the runic vis-à-vis the Latin alphabet should be mentioned. The first one, by Karin Fjellhammer

⁶⁴ Raschellà 2000. It is useful to note that the term 'diphthong' (MS *diptongus*) is used by the author of the treatise chiefly with reference to writing, that is, with the meaning of 'digraph' or 'ligature'.

Seim, is closely related to the investigations of Jan Ragnar Hagland referred to above among the works on the *FiGT*.⁶⁵ In discussing the function of the futhark in the teaching of reading and writing in late medieval Norway in the light of some fourteenth-century archaeological finds apparently containing runic spelling exercises (*runesyllabari*), Seim briefly considers the comparative evidence provided by the *ThGT*, focussing her attention on the so-called ‘sentence of king Valdemar’, a pedagogical device representing all the letters (both simple and compound) of the Norse futhark in a single meaningful utterance. Seim argues that this sentence, along with the relevant commentary provided by the author of the treatise, can in fact be viewed as falling within the category of these spelling exercises and therefore can be understood to provide the rudiments of runic (and, indirectly, also Latin) literacy. The second of the studies referred to is an article by Fabrizio D. Raschellà devoted to an overall discussion of the chapters of the *ThGT* on runic letters and to a definition of the grapheme inventory according to the information supplied by the author of the treatise, as well as to an assessment of the phonemic values of the runic symbols involved.⁶⁶

Although it has also suffered a long period of negligence, *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise* has unfortunately not yet seen the same revival of interest experienced in recent years by its younger and more famous companion. As a matter of fact, if exception is made of some fleeting mentions in works generically concerned with skaldic poetry or with OI learned literature, it may be said that this far-from-contemptible piece of work has been virtually ignored in published scholarship since the first — and so far only — critical edition and commentary by Björn M. Ólsen from 1884.⁶⁷ But, thankfully, it now seems that things are going to change.

References of some importance to the *FoGT* in publications of the last two decades are found in two articles, one by Peter Foote and the other by David McDougall, appearing in the 1980s and in recent works by Guðrún Nordal and Margaret Clunies Ross. Foote’s article has already been mentioned in connection with research on the Latinate background of the *ThGT*, and reference can be made to what has been observed above in this regard. McDougall’s study is partially devoted to the interpretation of and the search for sources or analogues for the commentary to a skaldic stanza of a religious nature probably composed by the

⁶⁵ Seim 1991.

⁶⁶ Raschellà 1994.

⁶⁷ *Den tredje og fjerde grammatiske Afhandling*, ed. by Ólsen.

author of the treatise to illustrate the rhetorical figure *homoeosis* or *homoeophasis* (MS: *emophasis*).⁶⁸

In a volume devoted to the evaluation of the role of skaldic poetry in medieval Icelandic textual culture, which will be discussed shortly, Guðrún Nordal observes, among other things, that one of the most distinctive characteristics of the *FoGT* as compared to the other GTs is the frequent resort of its author to religious verse to exemplify the rhetorical figures described in his work. This fact implies a cultural background to this text notably different from that of the century older *ThGT* — of which it is, in a sense, the direct continuation — and is perfectly in keeping with its putative provenance in a monastic centre (possibly Þingeyrar).⁶⁹

Careful consideration has also been given to the *FoGT* by Margaret Clunies Ross, who, in her extensive 2005 monograph on Old Norse poetry and poetics plainly ascribes to it the same status as the *ThGT* as a plentiful and valuable source of skaldic poetry and of theorization about poetic composition. She further points out that, in spite of its overall adherence to its chief Latin sources (Alexander of Villedieu's *Doctrinale* and Eberhard of Béthune's *Graecismus*), the *FoGT* displays more than a few original features and, above all, that it represents a first-rate source for our knowledge of late skaldic poetry, especially of Christian verse. Among the aspects which would profit from an extensive and in-depth study of the *FoGT*, Clunies Ross points out the close connection of the author with an ecclesiastical milieu and with Christian teaching in fourteenth-century Iceland, as well as his interest in facts, both past and contemporary, of Scandinavian history and politics.⁷⁰

Lastly, I wish to add that, while I was attending to the final draft of this article, I was told that a doctoral thesis — which I did not have the opportunity to see in time — reportedly including an Italian translation and a commentary of the *FoGT* was submitted in 2004 at the University of Palermo by a young scholar by the name of Michele Longo,⁷¹ who also informed me that an article of his, concerning an instance of contamination between skaldic and Latin rhetorical tradition, was about to appear.

⁶⁸ McDougall 1988, pp. 477–82. A preliminary version of this article was presented at the Sixth International Saga Conference (Helsingør) in 1985 but not published in the conference preprints.

⁶⁹ Guðrún Nordal 2001, p. 88.

⁷⁰ Clunies Ross 2005, esp. pp. 202–05.

⁷¹ Michele Longo, 'Il Quarto Trattato Grammaticale islandese: Testo, traduzione e commento' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Università di Palermo, 2004).

Before going on to considering some works dealing with particular aspects and problems of more than one GT or of OIGL as a whole, I wish to comment briefly on a study — so far unique of its kind, to my knowledge — written in 1993 by Sverrir Tómasson and specifically devoted to the analysis of the Prologue to the four GTs in Codex Wormianus of Snorri's *Edda*.⁷² Sverrir opens his article by observing that the composite character of Codex Wormianus, far from being accidental, has all the requisites of a grammatical digest, in the broadest sense of the term, closely reflecting what in antiquity and the Middle Ages was the global function of grammar, intended as 'scientia interpretandi poetas atque rhetoricos et recte scribendi loquendique ratio'.⁷³ After summing up the opinions expressed by scholars on the place of origin and the cultural environment of the manuscript, the author proceeds to a careful examination of the formal structure of the Prologue. In particular, he points out its references to contemporary works on poetic art (not explicitly mentioned in the text, where the general expressions *ný skáld* (*ok fræðimenn*) and *ýmisligar/klerkligar bækur* are used alternatively) and to an early attempt at orthographic systematization of Icelandic writing, of which no tangible evidence has come down to us: the *fyrsti lettrsháttur* 'written according to the sixteen-letter alphabet in the Nordic language (*í danskri tungu*), which Þóroddr the Rune Master and the priest Ari the Learned have set against the Latin alphabet established by Priscian', in which Sverrir Tómasson thinks he can recognize a primitive and essential form of the Latin alphabet as that used in the earliest Icelandic manuscripts. Giving a reliable interpretation of the most controversial passages of the Prologue, the author comes to the conclusion that the compiler of Codex Wormianus (who, according to common opinion, is to be identified as the author of the Prologue itself as well as of *The Fourth Grammatical Treatise*) operated with the intention of providing his contemporaries with a better understanding of the early skalds (*fornskáldin*), in order that the 'new skalds' (*ný skáld*) might conform to their teachings, much in the same way as medieval Latin grammarians treated the poets of classical antiquity. He was therefore, Sverrir further observes, a 'conservative' who was anxious to hand down *grammatica* in its original integrity, that is, as the all-inclusive study of language, literature, and style, and he conceived his work as 'a manual for poets and scholars' that needed instruction in the proper use of language.

⁷² Sverrir Tómasson 1993.

⁷³ 'the art of interpreting the poets and the rhetoricians, and the doctrine of writing and speaking correctly'. The definition is taken from the anonymous Codex Bernensis 123, here quoted from J. J. Baebler, *Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der lateinischen Grammatik im Mittelalter* (Halle: Buchhandlung des Waisenhauses, 1885; repr. Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1971), p. 39.

As many a reader will have noticed, it is sometimes difficult to group studies on the OIGTs according to their subject matter, since some of them combine a discussion of two or more treatises. In this last section I will therefore consider some works that have not been possible to assign to one or the other of the preceding sections.

The first group of these works is concerned in particular with the presence and the influence of Latin and, more generally, classical elements in the OIGTs. This is in fact one of the most investigated aspects, which has already been considered in connection with the individual treatises, so it will not be necessary to repeat here facts and concepts to which attention has already been drawn and which are, as a rule, largely uncontroversial.

Contributions to this subject have been made by, besides the authors previously mentioned, Federico Albano Leoni and Fabrizio D. Raschellà. The former, in an article published in the proceedings of a conference of the Société pour l'Information Grammaticale,⁷⁴ puts particular stress on the original character of certain features observable in the *FiGT* and *SGT*, which, according to him, are likely to derive from an indigenous, pre-Latinate, grammatical tradition; in so doing, he corroborates a view shared also by other scholars.⁷⁵ On the other hand, he maintains, against widespread consensus, that the two treatises have a practical rather than a theoretical interest for the history of linguistic thought. Raschellà has devoted a study to this general aspect of OIGL in which he examines the influence exerted on the Icelandic grammarians by authors and works of classical antiquity other than those falling within the 'technical', that is, grammatical and rhetorical, sphere.⁷⁶ The conclusion he arrives at is that, although medieval Icelandic grammarians shared much the same common classical background as their fellow scholars on the Continent, which they poured into their works, they typically reworked their materials and adapted them to the demands of their native cultural milieu to such an extent that singling out from their writings definite references to classical sources can often be quite problematic.

Closely connected with the study of the Latin influence on the works of the medieval Icelandic grammarians is another study by Raschellà, in which a comparative analysis of the technical vocabulary of the strictly 'grammatical' treatises, that is, the *FiGT*, the *SGT*, and the first part of the *ThGT* is carried out.⁷⁷ The

⁷⁴ Albano Leoni 1988.

⁷⁵ Compare, for example, Raschellà 1983, pp. 297–302.

⁷⁶ Raschellà 1998.

⁷⁷ Raschellà 2004.

general impression one gets from the results of this investigation is that, in the field of grammatical terminology, the dependence of the OIGTs on Latin models is also rather feeble and vague, in that quite a number of terms occurring in them — especially those referring to typical Icelandic features or to an unconventional linguistic analysis (as in the *FiGT* and, even more, in the *SGT*) — are either heavily altered or drawn from a native, pre-Latin grammatical tradition. It is as good as certain that an analysis of the technical vocabulary of the second part of the *ThGT* and of the *FoGT* would produce quite different results, yet it is still waiting to be done.

Another group of works devoted to a particular aspect of OIGL consists of three studies, of very different scope and value, concerned with an evaluation of OIGL in the context of medieval Icelandic poetic tradition and literary culture. The first is an article by Kurt Braunmüller dealing with the position and the function of the OIGTs in relation to Snorri's *Edda*.⁷⁸ After pointing out the reasons that may lie at the base of a conceptual connection between Old Norse poetics (especially as represented in Snorri's works) and OIGL, and that have caused the GTs to be invariably handed down in manuscripts of the *Edda*, Braunmüller argues that the GTs should in fact be considered a theoretical completion of, and an enlightening illustration of, Snorri's work, provided by later scholars and manuscript compilers in order to make them 'more acceptable' to their contemporaries.⁷⁹ Accordingly, Braunmüller states that it would be appropriate always to include these writings in editions of Snorri's *Edda*, a practice that was applied by some of the earliest editors but has not been followed in more recent times.

The second work belonging to this group is represented by Stephen Tranter's contribution to the miscellaneous volume *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* edited by Margaret Clunies Ross.⁸⁰ The article focuses on medieval Icelandic 'artes poeticae' or, to use a more comprehensive expression occurring in Tranter's work, 'ars grammaticopoetica', under which term all of Snorri's works on vernacular poetics and the four GTs (especially the *SGT* and the second part of the *ThGT*) are subsumed. Although Tranter's effort to gather all these works in one global treatment of skaldic poetics is in itself admissible, albeit not necessarily approvable, it should be pointed out that his discussion occasionally appears confused and not fully coherent. Furthermore, one cannot but notice that, as far as his remarks

⁷⁸ Braunmüller 1995.

⁷⁹ 'akzeptabler', Braunmüller 1995, p. 241.

⁸⁰ Tranter 2000.

about the *SGT* are concerned, the author shows himself to be not fully acquainted with the theoretical approach and the investigative method of this text.

The group is completed by Guðrún Nordal's wide-ranging investigation of the role of skaldic poetry in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Icelandic 'textual culture'.⁸¹ Since this work has already been mentioned on several occasions, it will suffice here to touch on only a few points that have not yet been treated. The issues concerning the relations of the OIGTs with skaldic verse and poetics discussed in this volume are numerous; nevertheless, Nordal's central thesis may perhaps be epitomized in the following three points:

(1) The GTs and Icelandic writing on skaldic verse-making (just like Snorri's poetological works) may be viewed as different expressions of one and the same reality, in that they testify to different perspectives of the formal study of *grammatica*;

(2) The fact that the GTs are invariably handed down in manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda* proves that OIGL was part and parcel of the theoretical discussion of vernacular poetry; and

(3) The central role of skaldic verse as a linguistic model in both poetic and grammatical treatises shows that it was 'at the heart of the textual culture and the formal education of the privileged classes' and that it 'proved the crucial link between the study of *grammatica* and the indigenous traditions in Iceland'.⁸²

To complete the picture, mention should be made of the description of the Icelandic GTs in Karl G. Johansson's extensive investigation of the script in Codex Wormianus of Snorri's *Edda*,⁸³ which, as is well known, contains the only extant collection of these writings, to which a prologue is prefixed. In his work, which I do not hesitate to describe as exemplary, Johansson scrutinizes, among other things, the orthography of the text of the four treatises and the Prologue and conjectures about the history of their manuscript transmission. Special consideration is given to the analysis of the *SGT*, which is in fact a careful and up-to-date review of the main studies devoted to this text.⁸⁴

I would like to conclude by warmly thanking Margaret Clunies Ross, the recipient of the present volume, for the zeal and the enthusiasm she has devoted in the last two decades to the study of Old Icelandic 'poetic grammar'. With her interdisciplinary and multifaceted approach she has often thrown fresh light on

⁸¹ Guðrún Nordal 2001.

⁸² Guðrún Nordal 2001, p. 115 and p. 340.

⁸³ Johansson 1997, pp. 43–59 and 201–08.

⁸⁴ Johansson 1997, pp. 50–55 and 205.

this fascinating and yet complex subject, opening new roads towards knowledge of the Old Norse world.

*Bibliography (1983–2005)*⁸⁵

Albano Leoni 1985–86:

Federico Albano Leoni, 'Donato in Thule: *Kenningar* e *tropi* nel Terzo trattato grammaticale islandese', *Annali – Filologia germanica* (Istituto Universitario Orientale – Napoli), 28–29 (*Studi in onore di Gemma Manganello*) (1985–86), 1–15. (Also published in *Cultura classica e cultura germanica settentrionale*, ed. by Pietro Janni and others, Atti del convegno [. . .] Macerata - S. Severino Marche, 2–4 maggio 1985 (Macerata: Università di Macerata, 1985 [1988]), pp. 385–98).

Albano Leoni 1988:

Federico Albano Leoni, 'La tradizione grammaticale latina nell'Islanda medievale', in *L'héritage des grammairiens latins de l'Antiquité aux Lumières*, ed. by Irène Rosier, Actes du colloque de Chantilly, 2–4 Sept. 1987 (Paris: Société pour l'Information Grammaticale, 1988), pp. 233–44.

Albano Leoni 1996:

Federico Albano Leoni, 'Icelandic Grammars', in *Lexicon grammaticorum: Who's Who in the History of World Linguistics*, ed. by Harro Stammerjohann (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1996), pp. 456–57.

Braunmüller 1983a:

Kurt Braunmüller, 'Der sog. zweite grammatische Traktat: Ein verkanntes Zeugnis altisländischer Sprachanalyse', in *Akten der Fünften Arbeitstagung der Skandinavisten des deutschen Sprachgebiets, 16.–22. August 1981 in Kungälv*, ed. by Heiko Uecker (St Augustin: Kretschmer, 1983), pp. 45–56. Repr. in Kurt Braunmüller, *Beiträge zur skandinavistischen Linguistik* (Oslo: Novus, 1995), pp. 210–26.

⁸⁵ The following list includes, in conformity with the title of the paper, only works on OIGL published between 1983 and 2005. Works mentioned in the paper which pre-date this period are reported in the footnotes. Icelandic authors, including those having a family name, are listed according to the Icelandic alphabetical order and naming system, i.e. first name followed by patronymic and/or family name. For those works that are not mentioned in the paper and whose connection with OIGL is not evident from the title, a brief explanatory note has been added in square brackets after the bibliographical entry.

Braunmüller 1983b:

Kurt Braunmüller, Review of *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1982), *Skandinavistik*, 13 (1983), 56–57.

Braunmüller 1984:

Kurt Braunmüller, 'Fandtes der en fonotaktisk analyse i middelalderen?', in *The Nordic Languages and Modern Linguistics 5*, Proceedings of the Fifth International Conference of Nordic Languages and Modern Linguistics, Århus 27 June–1 July 1983, ed. by K. Ringgaard and V. Sørensen (Århus: Nordisk Institut, Aarhus Universitet, 1984), pp. 221–29.

Braunmüller 1986:

Kurt Braunmüller, 'Mittelalterliche Sprachanalysen: Einige Anmerkungen aus heutiger Sicht', in *Germanic Dialects: Linguistic and Philological Investigations*, ed. by B. Brogyanyi and T. Krömmelbein (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1986), pp. 43–79. Repr. in Kurt Braunmüller, *Beiträge zur skandinavistischen Linguistik* (Oslo: Novus, 1995), pp. 174–209.

Braunmüller 1995:

Kurt Braunmüller, 'Sprachtheorie, Grammatik und Stilistik in einem Poetikhandbuch? (Zur Stellung und Funktion der 4 Grammatischen Traktate der Snorra-Edda)', in *Beiträge zur skandinavistischen Linguistik* (Oslo: Novus, 1995), pp. 227–46.

Braunmüller 1998:

Kurt Braunmüller, 'Grammatische Traktate', in *Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde*, ed. by Heinrich Beck and others, 2nd edn (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1968–), XII (1998), 573–79.

Busani / Raschellà 2001:

Lucia Busani and Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Un'edizione critica anche per l'immagine?', in *Testo e immagine nel medioevo germanico*, Atti del XXVI Convegno dell'Associazione Italiana di Filologia Germanica, Venezia 26–28 maggio 1999, ed. by M. G. Saibene and M. Buzzoni (Milano: Cisalpino, 2001), pp. 225–53 + plates.

Clunies Ross 1987:

Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987).

Clunies Ross 2005:

Margaret Clunies Ross, *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005).

Foote 1984 (1982):

Peter Foote, 'Latin Rhetoric and Icelandic Poetry: Some Contacts', in Peter Foote, *Aurvandilstá: Norse Studies*, ed. by Michael Barnes and others, Viking Collection, 2 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1984), pp. 249–70. Originally published in *Saga och sed* (1982), 107–27.

Gísli Sigurðsson 2000 (1994):

Gísli Sigurðsson, 'Óláfr Þórðarson hvítaskáld and Oral Poetry in the West of Iceland c. 1250: The Evidence of References to Poetry in *The Third Grammatical Treatise*', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 96–115. (A preliminary version was published in Icelandic, with the title 'Ólafur Þórðarson hvítaskáld og munnleg kvæðahefð á Vesturlandi um miðja 13. öld. Vitnisburður vísnaðæmanna í 3. máfræðiritgerðinni', in *Samtíðarsögur – The Contemporary Sagas*, The Ninth International Saga Conference, Akureyri 31.7–6.8.1994, Preprints, 2 vols ([Reykjavík]: Oddi, 1994), 1, 220–32.)

Guðrún Nordal 2001:

Guðrún Nordal, *Tools of Literacy: The Role of Skaldic Verse in Icelandic Textual Culture of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

Gunnar Harðarson 1993:

Gunnar Harðarson, 'Latneska málfræðihefðin á miðöldum', *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 15 (*Rask-ráðstefnan 1993*) (1993), 141–57. [pp. 154–55: brief reference to the possible connections between Latin grammatical tradition and OIGL.]

Gunnar Harðarson 1999:

Gunnar Harðarson, "'Alls vér erum einnar tungu": Um skyldleika ensku og íslensku í Fyrstu málfræðiritgerðinni', *Íslensk mál og almenn málfræði*, 21 (1999), 11–30.

Gurevich 2000:

Elena Gurevich, 'Scaldic Praise Poetry and *Macrologia*: Some Observations on Óláfr Þórðarson's Use of his Sources', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference, 2–7 July 2000*,

University of Sydney, ed. by G. Barnes and Margaret Clunies Ross, 1 vol + supplement (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 2000), pp. 100–08.

Hagland 1992:

Jan Ragnar Hagland, “Den første grammatiske avhandling” og islandske runer’, in *Kongsmenn og krossmenn*, Festskrift til Grethe Authén Blom, ed. by Steinar Supphellen ([Trondheim]: Tapir, 1992), pp. 131–38.

Hagland 1993:

Jan Ragnar Hagland, ‘Møte mellom to skriftspråkskulturar? Til spørsmålet om runeskrift har noko å seia for lingvistisk analyse i Første grammatiske avhandling’, *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 15 (*Rask-ráðstefnan* 1993) (1993), 159–71.

Hagland 1996 (1994):

Jan Ragnar Hagland, ‘Ingimundr prestr Þorgeirsson and Icelandic Runic Literacy in the Twelfth Century’, *alvíssmál*, 6 (1996), 99–108. (A preliminary version was published in *Samtiðarsögur – The Contemporary Sagas*, The Ninth International Saga Conference, Akureyri 31.7–6.8.1994, Preprints, 2 vols ([Reykjavík]: Oddi, 1994), I, 286–95.)

Hagland 2000:

Jan Ragnar Hagland, “‘*Alls vér erum einnar tungu*’ – igjen: Språkhistorisk realitet eller litterært topos?’, *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 22 (2000), 107–12.

Hagland 2005:

Jan Ragnar Hagland, ‘On Scalds and Runes’, in *Papers on Scandinavian and Germanic Language and Culture*, published in honour of Michael Barnes on his sixty-fifth birthday, 28 June 2005 (= *NOWELE* 46–47) (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), pp. 77–85.

Haugen 1984:

Einar Haugen, Review of *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1982), *Scandinavian Studies*, 56 (1984), 65–67.

Haugen 1988:

Einar Haugen, ‘Scandinavian Literature: Grammatical’, in *Dictionary of the Middle Ages*, ed. by Joseph R. Strayer and others, 13 vols (New York: Scribner, 1982–89), XI (1988), 10–13.

Haugen 1994:

Einar Haugen, 'First Grammatical Treatise (Twelfth Century AD)', in *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, ed. by R. E. Asher and others, 10 vols (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1994), III, 1251. [Essential description of the content and theoretical approach of the *FiGT* and its scholarly evaluation.]

Hovdhaugen 1987:

Even Hovdhaugen, 'The First Vernacular Grammars in Europe: The Scandinavian Area', *Histoire Épistémologie Langage*, 9.1 (*Les premières grammaires des vernaculaires européens*) (1987), 73–89.

Johansson 1997:

Karl G. Johansson, *Studier i Codex Wormianus: Skrifttradition och avskrifts-verksamhet vid ett isländskt skriptorium under 1300-talet* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1997).

Johansson 1998:

Karl G. Johansson, 'Retoriker och översättare. Den fjärde grammatiska avhandlingen och medeltida översättningsprinciper', in *Form – innehåll – effekt: Stilistiska och retoriska studier tillägnade Peter Cassirer på 65-årsdagen* (Göteborg: Novum Grafiska, 1998), pp. 121–31.

Koerner 1997:

E. F. K. Koerner, 'Einar Haugen as a Historian of Linguistics', *American Journal of Germanic Linguistics and Literatures*, 9 (1997), 221–38.

Kristinn Jóhannesson and others 2002:

Första grammatiska avhandlingen, Svensk översättning med isländsk parallelltext, ed. by Kristinn Jóhannesson, M. Lagervall, and K. Lundkvist, MISS, 40 (Göteborg: Institutionen för Svenska Språket, Göteborgs Universitet, 2002).

Kristján Árnason 1984:

Kristján Árnason, Review of *The So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: An Orthographic Pattern of Late Thirteenth-Century Icelandic*, ed. by Fabrizio D. Raschellà (Firenze: Le Monnier, 1982), *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 6 (1984), 210–17.

Kristján Árnason 1993:

Kristján Árnason, 'Málfræðihugmyndir Sturlunga', *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 15 (*Rask-ráðstefnan* 1993) (1993), 173–206.

Krömmelbein 1992:

Thomas Krömmelbein, 'Creative Compilers: Observations on the Manuscript Tradition of Snorri's *Edda*', in *Snorrastefna, 25.–27. júlí 1990*, ed. by Úlfar Bragason, Rit Stofnunar Sigurðar Nordals, 1 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals, 1992), pp. 113–29. [Discusses, among other things, the position and function of the OIGTs in manuscripts of Snorri's *Edda*.]

Krömmelbein 1998:

Óláfr Þórðarson *Hvítaskáld, Dritte Grammatische Abhandlung* [...], ed. by Björn Magnus [*sic*] Ólsen; trans., annotated, and ed. by Thomas Krömmelbein (Oslo: Novus, 1998).

Kusmenko 1985:

Jurij K. Kusmenko, 'Srednevekovnye islandskie grammatičeskie traktaty' ['The Medieval Icelandic Grammatical Treatises'], in *Istorija lingvističeskikh učenij: Srednevekovaja Evropa* (Leningrad: Nauka, 1985), pp. 77–97.

Kusmenko 1993:

Jurij K. Kusmenko, 'Einige Bemerkungen zu den altisländischen grammatischen Abhandlungen', *Skandinavistik*, 23 (1993), 85–95.

Kusmenko 1997:

Jurij K. Kusmenko, 'Weitere Bemerkungen zu den altisländischen grammatischen Abhandlungen', *Skandinavistik*, 27 (1997), 114–24. [Reply to Ulvestad 1995.]

Louis-Jensen 1989:

Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Iota unum: Til Den første grammatiske afhandling, Cod. Worm. 86:32', in *Festskrift til Finn Hødnebo 29. desember 1989* (Oslo: Novus, 1989), pp. 193–95. [On various possible interpretations of the passage in *FiGT* where the spelling *e* instead of *i* at the onset of rising diphthongs is argued for.]

Louis-Jensen 2004:

Jonna Louis-Jensen, 'Forvanskning og/eller forgrening? Til Den første grammatiske afhandling 84:4 og 84:12–13', in *Poetik und Gedächtnis: Festschrift für Heiko Uecker zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by K. Hoff and others (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 225–29. [On the meaning of the verbs *gangask*, *greinask*, and *gørask* referred to language diversity in the *FiGT*.]

Magnús Snædal 1993:

Magnús Snædal, 'Yfirlit yfir forníslenskar málfræðiritgerðir', *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 15 (*Rask-ráðstefnan 1993*) (1993), 207–20.

Malm 1990:

Mats Malm, 'Sannkenningarnars egentliga egenskaper', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 105 (1990), 111–30.

McDougall 1988:

David McDougall, "Pseudo-Augustinian" Passages in "Jóns saga baptista 2" and the "Fourth Grammatical Treatise", *Traditio*, 44 (1988), 463–83.

Melazzo 1985:

Lucio Melazzo, 'The Opening of the So-Called Second Grammatical Treatise: In Search of the Sources', in *Cultura classica e cultura germanica settentrionale*, ed. by Pietro Janni and others, Atti del convegno [. . .] Macerata - S. Severino Marche, 2–4 maggio 1985 (Macerata: Università di Macerata, 1985 [1988]), pp. 399–424.

Micillo 1993:

Valeria Micillo, 'Classical Tradition and Norse Tradition in the "Third Grammatical Treatise"', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 108 (1993), 68–79.

Micillo 1994:

Valeria Micillo, 'La terminologia tecnica nel *Terzo Trattato Grammaticale Islandese*', *Annali – Sezione germanica (Istituto Universitario Orientale – Napoli)*, n.s., 4 (1994), 125–42.

Micillo 1995:

Valeria Micillo, 'Motivi letterari medievali nel prologo del *Terzo Trattato Grammaticale Islandese*', *Annali – Sezione germanica (Istituto Universitario Orientale – Napoli)*, n.s., 5 (1995), 65–81.

Micillo 1999:

Valeria Micillo, 'Die grammatische Tradition des insularen Mittelalters in Island: Spuren insularer Einflüsse im *Dritten Grammatischen Traktat*', in *Übersetzung, Adaptation und Akkulturation im insularen Mittelalter*, ed. by E. Poppe and H. L. C. Tristram (Münster: Nodus, 1999), pp. 215–29.

Micillo 2000:

Valeria Micillo, 'The Latin Tradition and Icelandic', in *History of the Language Sciences – Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaften [...]*, ed. by Sylvain Auroux and others, HSK, 18.1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2000), pp. 617–25.

Perridon 1985:

Harry Perridon, 'Neutralization, Archiphonemes and the First Grammatical Treatise', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, 23 (1985), 71–96.

Quinn 1994:

Judy Quinn, 'Eddu list: The Emergence of Skaldic Pedagogy in Medieval Iceland', *alvíssmál*, 4 (1994), 69–92.

Raschellà 1983:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Die altisländische grammatische Literatur: Forschungsstand und Perspektiven zukünftiger Untersuchungen', *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen*, 235 (1983), 271–316.

Raschellà 1984:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'La letteratura grammaticale germanica del medioevo: Considerazioni preliminari', *Annali – Filologia germanica (Istituto Universitario Orientale – Napoli)*, 27 (1984), 261–69.

Raschellà 1993:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Grammatical Treatises', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland, 1993), pp. 235–37.

Raschellà 1994:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Rune e alfabeto latino nel trattato grammaticale di Óláfr Þórðarson', in *Sagnaping helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994*, ed. by Gísli Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran, and Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1994), pp. 679–90.

Raschellà 1998:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'The Classical Heritage in Old Icelandic Grammatical Literature', in *L'antichità nella cultura europea del medioevo – L'Antiquité dans la culture européenne du Moyen Âge*, Ergebnisse der internationalen Tagung in Padua 27.9–1.10.1997, ed. by R. Brusegan and A. Zironi, WODAN, 75 – Greifswalder Beiträge zum Mittelalter, 62 (Greifswald: Reineke, 1998), pp. 117–26.

Raschellà 2000:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Vowel Change in Thirteenth-Century Icelandic: A First-Hand Witness', in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza and others (Trieste: Parnaso, 2000), pp. 383–89.

Raschellà 2004:

Fabrizio D. Raschellà, 'Tradizione locale e modelli stranieri nella terminologia grammaticale islandese medievale', in *I Germani e gli altri: II parte*, ed. by

V. Dolcetti Corazza and R. Gendre (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2004), pp. 3–37.

Santini 1994:

Carlo Santini, “‘Kenningar Donati’: An Investigation of the Classical Models in the Third Icelandic Grammatical Treatise”, *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 1 (1994), 37–44.

Seim 1991:

Karin Fjellhammer Seim, ‘Middelalderske runesyllabariar’ [erroneously: ‘Mutmaßungen zum Maltstein’!], in *Festskrift til Ottar Grønvik på 75-årsdagen den 21. oktober 1991*, ed. by J. O. Askedal and others (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1991), pp. 124–35.

Stavnm 2003:

Rolf Stavnem, ‘Hvad er en sannkenning? Om en tvivlsom passage i Tredje Grammatiske Afhandling’, in *Scandinavian and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages: Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference, Bonn, Germany 28th July–2nd August 2003*, ed. by Rudolf Simek and Judith Meurer (Bonn: Hausdruckerei der Universität Bonn, 2003), pp. 466–70.

Stefán Karlsson 2002:

Stefán Karlsson, ‘The Development of Latin Script II: In Iceland’, in *The Nordic Languages: An International Handbook of the History of the North Germanic Languages*, ed. by Oskar Bandle and others, 2 vols, HSK, 22.1–2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2002–05), I (2002), 832–40. [Frequent references to the *FiGT* as a normative source of Icelandic orthography in the earliest period of manuscript tradition.]

Sverrir Tómasson 1988a (1987):

Sverrir Tómasson, ‘Fyrsta málfræðiritgerðin og íslensk menntun á 12. öld’, *Tímarit Háskóla Íslands*, 3 (1988), 71–78. (Originally printed as an independent publication (Reykjavík, 1987).)

Sverrir Tómasson 1988b:

Sverrir Tómasson, *Formálar íslenskra sagnaritara á miðöldum* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 1988). [Occasionally investigates the formal structure of the OIGTs in relation to the principles of Latin rhetoric.]

Sverrir Tómasson 1992:

Sverrir Tómasson, ‘Þrívægurinn: stafræði og mælskulist’, in *Íslensk bókmenntasaga*, vol. I, ed. by Guðrún Nordal, Sverrir Tómasson, and Vésteinn Ólason (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1992), pp. 523–33.

Sverrir Tómasson 1993:

Sverrir Tómasson, 'Formáli málfræðiritgerðanna fjögurra í Wormsbók', *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði*, 15 (*Rask-ráðstefnan 1993*) (1993), 221–40.

Sverrir Tómasson 1998:

Sverrir Tómasson, 'Málvöndun á miðöldum', in *Greinar af sama meidi helgaðar Indriða Gíslasýni sjötugum* (Reykjavík: Rannsóknarstofnun Kennaraháskóla Íslands, 1998), pp. 293–300. [On the role of OIGL in the context of Icelandic language cultivation in the Middle Ages.]

Tranter 2000:

Stephen Tranter, 'Medieval Icelandic *artes poeticae*', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 140–60.

Ulvestad 1995:

Bjarne Ulvestad, 'Noch einmal: *Die erste grammatische Abhandlung*', *Skandinavistik*, 25 (1995), 51–59.

Wills 2001:

Tarrin Wills, 'The Foundation of Grammar: An Edition of the First Section of Óláfr Þórðarson's Grammatical Treatise' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney, 2001 <<http://www-personal.arts.usyd.edu.au/tarwills/thesis/>> [11 September 2006]).

Wills 2004:

Tarrin Wills, 'The *Third Grammatical Treatise* and Ole Worm's *Literatura Runica*', *Scandinavian Studies*, 76 (2004), 439–58. [On the influence of the *ThGT*'s first section on early runological studies.]

Þórir Óskarsson 2005:

Þórir Óskarsson, 'Rhetoric and Style', in *A Companion to Old Norse-Icelandic Literature and Culture*, ed. by Rory McTurk (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 354–71.

V. Prolonged Traditions

THE 'DISCOURSE OF COUNSEL' AND THE 'TRANSLATED' *RIDDARASÖGUR*

Geraldine Barnes

Foremost among scholarship over the last thirty years on the interaction between historical forces and textual production in Old Norse-Icelandic literature is Margaret Clunies Ross's groundbreaking work on the significance of mythic paradigms in representing prevailing modes of thought in early Scandinavian society and the importance of Christian-Latin learning on the shaping of the written construction of Norse myth.¹ This essay is dedicated to that distinguished scholar, teacher, and colleague, whose relish for confronting the difficult questions about the underlying ideologies of Old Norse-Icelandic literature galvanized the doctoral research that laid the foundation for the following consideration of the 'translated' *riddarasögur* and the medieval European literary 'discourse of counsel'.

Secular advice literature in the Middle Ages ranged from household management and 'courtesy books' of etiquette and social manners to manuals of chivalry²

¹ See, in particular, Margaret Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson's Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987); *Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, 2 vols, Viking Collection, 7, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press 1994–98); *A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2005); 'The Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth in Medieval Icelandic Writings', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 116–39.

² See, for example, J. W. Nicholls, *The Matter of Courtesy: A Study of Medieval Courtesy Books and the Gawain-Poet* (Woodbridge: Brewer, 1985), pp. 14–18, 45–56; Diane Bornstein, *Mirrors of Courtesy* (Hamden: Archon, 1975); David Scott-Macnab, *A Fifteenth-Century Sporting Lexicon: The J.B. Treatise*, Medium Ævum Monographs, n.s., 23 (Oxford: Society for the Study of Medieval Languages and Literature, 2003).

and treatises on statecraft. Most readily identifiable in its literary manifestation in the *Fürstenspiegel* ('mirror of princes') tradition, advice to rulers literature flourished across Europe from the ninth century to the fifteenth, most famously and influentially in John of Salisbury's *Policraticus* (1159) and Aegidius Romanus's *De regimine principum* (1277–79).³ Although many such works are either dedicated to or were almost certainly written for particular kings and princes, their popularity over many centuries indicates that *Fürstenspiegel* audiences extended beyond a specific royal circle or historical moment.

Over the last two decades, the *Fürstenspiegel*'s primary concern — the just exercise of secular authority, particularly as mediated through the heeding of wise counsel — has been identified as a significant strand of medieval thought⁴ which permeates other forms of medieval European writing. Larry Scanlon, for instance, has demonstrated the interconnection between the *Fürstenspiegel* and the 'classical' or 'public' exemplum.⁵ He and others have investigated *Fürstenspiegel* influence on the fourteenth-century English poets Gower, Chaucer, and Langland.⁶ In *The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance*, Madeleine Perner Cosman showed how the *enfances* of Tristan, Lancelot, and Perceval in French, English, and German romance, which detail his formal education by a series of tutors, have their origin in the ideal of education prescribed by the *Policraticus* and *De regimine principum*.⁷ The giving and taking of counsel, as feudal custom and as institution of government, has more recently been investigated in relation to Middle English and Middle High German romance and to other medieval literary forms.⁸

³ The definitive study is Wilhelm Berges, *Die Fürstenspiegel des hohen und späten Mittelalters* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1938).

⁴ Although it is one alien to the present day. As Richard Firth Green comments: 'Few men in the middle ages would have understood our reticence about giving advice.' *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 161.

⁵ Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 57, 82–105.

⁶ Lee Patterson, "What Man Artow?": Authorial Self-Definition in *The Tale of Sir Thopas* and *The Tale of Melibee*, *Studies in the Age of Chaucer*, 11 (1989), 117–75. See also Paul Strohm, *Social Chaucer* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 144–51; Leonard Michael Koff, *Chaucer and the Art of Storytelling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 91–99.

⁷ Madeleine Perner Cosman, *The Education of the Hero in Arthurian Romance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965).

⁸ Geraldine Barnes, *Counsel and Strategy in Middle English Romance* (Cambridge, 1993); Lynn Staley Johnson, 'Inverse Counsel: Contexts for the *Melibee*', *Studies in Philology*, 87 (1990),

The Fürstenspiegel in Norway

The *Pseudo-Cyprianus de XII abusivis saeculi*, a seventh-century treatise on social conduct and the proper exercise of worldly authority, probably had a formative role in the development of the European *Fürstenspiegel*.⁹ It was translated into Old Norwegian at the end of the twelfth century, possibly at the instigation of Archbishop Eysteinn Erlendsson on the occasion of the coronation of Magnús Erlingsson in 1163 or 1164.¹⁰ The importance of kingly conduct to the well-being of the kingdom is the subject of the work's most widely known section, the figure of the *rex iniquus* or unjust king.¹¹ The *rex iniquus* is defined largely in terms of deviation from the model of the *rex iustus*, who gives alms to the poor, surrounds himself with mature, wise, and sober counsellors (*senes et sapientes et sobrios consiliarios*),¹² and promotes justice, piety, and peace.¹³

The *Fürstenspiegel* emerges fully fledged in Norway in the form of the *Konungs skuggsjá*, a dialogue between father and son, written during the reign of Hákon Hákonarson (1217–63) and perhaps intended for his sons,¹⁴ in which father

137–55; Nicholas Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes: Counsel and Constraint* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2001); Joseph Sullivan, *Counsel in Middle High German Arthurian Romance* (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 2001). Judith Ferster's *Fictions of Advice* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996) places a number of English mirrors for princes in specific historical contexts — the reigns of various kings.

⁹ For the most recent discussion of the influence of the work, see Hans Hubert Anton, 'Pseudo-Cyprian: De duodecim abusivis saeculi und sein Einfluss auf den Kontinent, insbesondere auf die karolingischen Fürstenspiegel', in *Die Iren und Europa im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. by Heinz Löwe (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982), II, 568–617.

¹⁰ Didrik Arup Seip, 'Introduction', in *The Arna-Magnaean Manuscript 677, 4to*, ed. by Jón Helgason (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1949), p. 17.

¹¹ On *abusio* 9 and the consequences of sinful rulership, see Rob Meens, 'Politics, Mirrors of Princes and the Bible: Sins, Kings and the Well-being of the Realm', *Early Medieval Europe*, 7 (1998), 345–57 (pp. 349–51).

¹² Siegmund Hellmann, *Pseudo-Cyprianus De XII abusivis saeculi*, Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur, third series, 4 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1909), p. 51.

¹³ All but the last *abusio* and the end of the eleventh are lost in the sole surviving manuscript of the Old Norse version, AM 677 4° (early thirteenth century). Arni Magnússon listed the work's original contents on a paper page, glued to AM 435a 4°; its ninth section was *Konungr illgiarn*. See Didrik Arup Seip, 'Et Pseudo-cypriansk skrift i norsk oversettelse fra 12. Hundreår', *Maal og Minne* (1945), 21–29; Seip, 'Introduction', pp. 14–15.

¹⁴ For a summary of reasons for this dating, see Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of the King's Mirror*, Viking Collection, 8 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1987), pp. 153–54 and 209–10.

directs son along the road to professional success. Its concluding section, which is devoted entirely to the king's duties in the administration of justice, offers a working model of the *rex iustus*. The genre and historical context of the *Konungs skuggsjá* have been discussed most fully by Sverre Bagge, who has situated the work within a pan-European literary tradition and identified its distinctly Norwegian concerns as well.¹⁵ Like other *Fürstenspiegel* literature, the *Konungs skuggsjá* makes extensive use of exempla which offer positive and negative role models.¹⁶ That the most important original work of Hákon's reign should have been a *Fürstenspiegel* signals the cultivation of an ideology of statecraft in which, as elsewhere in medieval Europe, the guidance of good counsellors was a basic tenet.¹⁷ Sturla Þórðarson's biography of Hákon, *Hákonar saga Hákonarson* (1265), reinforces the *Konungs skuggsjá*'s emphasis on the monarch's obligation to accept salutary counsel. The saga gives prominence to the institutionalization of counsel during Hákon's reign, and, although historical fact sometimes belies its portrait of the King, Sturla pictures him as 'surrounded by good counsellors, as becomes a great king and *rex iustus*'.¹⁸

The *Konungs skuggsjá* does not, however, represent itself as directed solely to a royal audience. Although it calls itself 'King's Mirror', its contents are explicitly intended for the benefit of all sections of society:

Enn þó at þat nafn sie helldur a ad kongs skugsion sie kallat þa er hun skiput ollum og þar med heimilld suo sem almenningur þui at huerium er kostur j at síá er vill. og skygna huort er helldur vill wm sidu annara edur síálfs signs og flesta mun hann þar j finna. og væntir mig at hann mun eigi vera taldur med osidar monnum er vel fylgir þui ollu er þar má j finna og til hanz sidar horfir huada manni sem hann er at tign edur nafni. (p. 2/22–27)

(Although the book is first and foremost a king's mirror, yet it is intended for every one as a common possession; since whoever wishes is free to look into it and to seek information, as he may desire, about his own conduct, or any other type of manners which he may find discussed in the book. And I believe that no man will be considered unwise or

¹⁵ See Bagge, *Political Thought*, passim. See also the essays in *Speculum regale: Der altnorwegische Königsspiegel ('Konungs skuggsjá') in der europäischen Tradition*, ed. by Jens Eike Schnall and Rudolf Simek (Vienna: Fassbaender, 2000).

¹⁶ On the use of exempla in the *Konungs skuggsjá*, see Vicente Almazán, 'The Exemplum in the *Konungs skuggsjá*', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 13 (2000), 155–66; Bagge, *Political Thought*, pp. 126–30.

¹⁷ On the role of counsellors in the *Konungs skuggsjá*, see Bagge, *Political Thought*, p. 162; Bagge, *From Gang Leader to the Lord's Anointed* (Odense: Odense University Press, 1996), p. 153.

¹⁸ Bagge, *From Gang Leader*, p. 153.

unmannerly who carefully observes everything that he finds in this work which is suited to his mode of living, no matter what his rank or title may be.) (p. 75)¹⁹

A substantial part of the work is a detailed and practical account, which appears to have been written from an insider's viewpoint,²⁰ of the qualifications and duties of recruits to the royal service, the *hirðmenn*. As Sverre Bagge expresses it: 'we may well regard the various forms of learning presented in it as intended for the education of the king's servants as much as for the king himself.'²¹

Konungs skuggsjá and Riddarasögur

The other major literary enterprise associated with Hákon's reign is the translation and adaptation of Old French verse epic and chivalric romance into the prose narratives known as 'translated' *riddarasögur* ('sagas of knights'). Recent scholarship has identified and stressed the likely commonality of the literary milieu which gave rise to these *riddarasögur* and to the *Konungs skuggsjá*, namely, the clerical circle around the king.²² Named in surviving manuscripts as the commissioner of some of these translations from the French (*Strengleikar*, *Ívens saga*, *Elis saga*), Hákon is generally accepted as the instigator of the importation of chivalric narrative into Norway.

But just as there is disagreement about the authorship of the Prologue to the *Konungs skuggsjá*, since it exists only in Icelandic manuscripts,²³ so there is doubt as to whether the extant *riddarasögur* represent the work of Norwegian translator-

¹⁹ All references are to *Konungs skuggsjá*, ed. by Ludvig Holm-Olsen, 2nd rev. edn, *Norrøne tekster*, 1 (Oslo: Norsk historisk kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1983). English translations and page references are from Laurence Marcellus Larson, *The King's Mirror (Speculum Regale – Konungs skuggsjá)* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1917).

²⁰ Bagge, *Political Thought*, p. 162.

²¹ *Political Thought*, p. 22.

²² See Susanne Kramarz-Bein, *Die Þiðreks saga im Kontext der altnorwegischen Literatur* (Tübingen: Francke, 2002), pp. 97–102.

²³ Ludvig Holm-Olsen attributes it to an Icelandic redactor; Sverre Bagge to the Norwegian author. See Ludvig Holm-Olsen, 'The Prologue to the *Konungs skuggsjá*: Did the Original Author Write It?', in *Speculum Norrænum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. by Ursula Dronke, Guðrún Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), pp. 223–41; Sverre Bagge, 'Old Norse Theories of Society: From *Rígsþula* to *Konungs skuggsjá*', in *Speculum regale*, ed. by Schnall and Simek, pp. 10–13.

adapters or Icelandic scribes, or some combination of the two.²⁴ Although some translated *riddarasögur* survive in Old Norwegian codices, notably *Strengleikar* and *Elis ok Rósamundu* in De la Gardie 4–7 fol (c. 1270), the majority are preserved only in Old Icelandic manuscripts dating from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, and opinion is divided between those who see the royal milieu of mid-thirteenth-century Norway as a valid base from which to analyse the ethical dimension of the surviving texts and those who do not. For readers of the former persuasion, overt points of intersection with the *Konungs skuggsjá* are demonstrated by *Parcevals saga*, the focus to date of discussion and debate concerning the ideology of the translated *riddarasögur*.²⁵ This saga lays its emphasis on tutelage in the practical and ethical fundamentals of chivalry and substitutes a worldly code of conduct, strongly reminiscent of the definition of *siðgæði* ('good breeding') in the *Konungs skuggsjá*, for the predominantly religious instructions which Perceval receives from his mother in Chrétien's *Conte del Graal*.²⁶

Consideration of *Parcevals saga* from the broader perspective of the European discourse of counsel may help to resolve an apparent cultural anomaly which Regina Psaki has identified in the translated *riddarasögur*: that the wholesome counsel of women in this and other translated *riddarasögur* differs markedly, and puzzlingly, from the proverbial 'cold' counsels of women in indigenous Icelandic romances and *Islendingasögur*.²⁷ One way to account for that difference is to view

²⁴ For a range of views, see Geraldine Barnes, 'The Riddarasögur: A Medieval Exercise in Translation', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 19 (1977), 403–41; Barnes, 'Scribes, Editors, and the riddarasögur', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 97 (1982), 36–51; Marianne Kalinke, *King Arthur North-by-Northwest: The Matière de Bretagne in Old Norse-Icelandic Romances*, Bibliotheca Arnarnagana, 37 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1981); Gerd Wolfgang Weber, 'The Decadence of Feudal Myth: Towards a Theory of Riddarasaga and Romance', in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press, 1986), pp. 415–54.

²⁵ See, for example, Geraldine Barnes, 'Parcevals saga: riddara skuggsjá?', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 99 (1984), 49–62; Kramarz-Bein, *Die Þiðreks saga im Kontext der altnorwegischen Literatur*, pp. 238–9. See also, by Kramarz-Bein, 'Höfische Unterhaltung und ideologisches Ziel: Das Beispiel der altnorwegischen *Parcevals saga*', in *Die Aktualität der Saga: Festschrift für Hans Schottmann*, ed. by Stig Toftgaard Andersen (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), pp. 63–84.

²⁶ See Barnes, 'Parcevals saga: Riddara skuggsjá?', pp. 50–51.

²⁷ 'Why should the narrative function and the ethical freight of the counsels of women differ so markedly from the indigenous to the translated sagas? Why should the ideology of service be so explicitly linked to female proponents?' Regina Psaki, 'Women's Counsel in the *Riddarasögur*',

these women of sage counsel within the European tradition of female wisdom represented by Dame Prudence in Chaucer's 'Fürstenspiegel', the *Tale of Melibee*. The wise counsel of Perceval's mother and other women in *Parcevals saga*, which, Psaki argues, achieves a reconciliation between a male order of violence and disorder and a female order of pacifism and order,²⁸ parallels the ethical opposition of male and female in the *Tale of Melibee*, in which 'Prudence [. . .] begins by undercutting two tenents [*sic*] of a predominantly male and hierarchical society, the belief in force and the disbelief in a woman's ability to give wise advice'.²⁹

The other Norse versions of Chrétien's narratives, *Ívens saga* and *Erex saga* (from Chrétien's *Yvain* and *Erec et Enide* respectively), and sections of the collection known as *Strengleikar* — from the *lais* of Marie de France and some additional anonymous *lais* — also exhibit patterns of narrative momentum in which counsel drives the action and defines the ethos. The hero must listen, must pay attention, must follow good advice to succeed; the most grievous loss for a ruler is that of a good counsellor.

Consultative dialogues between two women, a chatelaine (Fr. Laudine) and her handmaid (Fr. Lunete; ON Lúneta), frame the central narrative action in *Yvain* and *Ívens saga*. Chrétien's Lunete acts simultaneously as defence strategist for the newly widowed Laudine — she should cease mourning for her husband, be mindful of her duty to defend her domain, and wed again — and as marriage broker for her privately desired and politically strategic union with her husband's slayer, Yvain (ON Íven). Lúneta's pivotal role is underlined in the saga by the anonymity of her mistress, who remains simply *frúin* ('the lady').

The overwhelming authority of *Amors* renders the consultative process largely irrelevant in *Yvain*. By the time Laudine has enacted the charade of formal consultation with her baronage about this prospective marriage, she has her mind made up: 'Amors a feire li comande | Ce, don los et consoil demande' (lines 2139–40; 'Love commanded her to do that for which she asked their advice and counsel', p. 322).³⁰

in *Cold Counsel: Women in Old Norse Literature and Mythology*, ed. by Sarah M. Anderson with Karen Swenson (New York: Routledge, 2002), 201–24 (p. 218).

²⁸ Psaki, 'Women's Counsel', pp. 217–18.

²⁹ Johnson, 'Inverse Counsel', p. 141.

³⁰ All quotations from and references to *Yvain* are from *Chrestien Troyes: Yvain (Le Chevalier au lion), the critical text of Wendelin Foerster with introduction, notes and glossary*, ed. by T. B. W. Reid (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1942; repr. 1967). All translations are from *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, trans. by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin Classics, 1991).

Not so in *Ívens saga*, where there is no scene equivalent to the self-kindling of Laudine's erotic interest by her imagined debate with Yvain:

Et par li meïsme s'alume
Aussi con la busche, qui fume,
Tant que la flame s'y est mise,
Que nus ne sofle ne atise. (lines 1777–80)

(by her own efforts [she] kindled her love, like the log that smokes until the flame catches, without anyone blowing or fanning it.) (p. 317)

When the lady goes through the motions of consulting her barons in *Ívens saga*, her decision is indeed predetermined, not by the command of *Amors* but by her own resolution: 'En hún hefði þó gert at þeim öllum mislíkaði' (p. 62); '[S]he would [...] have had her way even though all had spoken against it' (pp. 62, 63).³¹ There may be hints of private desire here, but to all intents and purposes, the lady, having recognized wise counsel for what it is, marries an attractive man primarily for the good of her realm.

The pared-down narrative of *Ívens saga* thus uncovers a narrative seam cloaked in *Yvain* by the rhetoric of courtly love: a contest between good and bad or inadequate counsel. On the one hand, an ineffective council of barons fails to provide its ruler with the obligatory *consilium et auxilium* which governed the feudal bond between lord and vassal;³² on the other, the informal provision of salutary counsel by a woman of lesser rank ultimately saves the realm.³³

The corruption of morality and of good sense of those whose business it is to govern the land is, according to the *Konungs skuggsjá* (p. 51/19–20), the worst calamity that can befall it. Laudine's barons are guilty on both counts. They are collectively cowardly in conduct and incompetent in counsel; her seneschal, by

³¹ All quotations from and references to *Ívens saga*, and English translations, are from *Norse Romance*, vol. II: *Knights of the Round Table*, ed. and trans. Marianne E. Kalinke (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999).

³² 'The vassal was bound to assist his lord by his advice, and [...] this advice was a form of service': F. L. Ganshof, *Feudalism*, trans. by Philip Grierson (London: Longmans, Green, 1952), pp. 83–84.

³³ For an analysis of the importance of Lunete as counsellor in *Yvain* and Hartmann von Aue's *Iwein*, see J. M. Sullivan, 'The Lady Lunete: Literary Conventions of Counsel and the Criticism of Counsel in Chrétien's *Yvain* and Hartmann's *Iwein*', *Neophilologus*, 85 (2001), 335–54. Sullivan argues that, in both works, the Lunete-Laudine relationship is 'representative of superior-subordinate counsel relationships throughout society in general' (p. 343) and that, given the contractual responsibilities of the feudal counsellor, Lunete's performance is 'ambivalent' (p. 341).

Lunete's report, is wicked, thieving, and disloyal ('Uns fel, uns lerre, uns desleaus', line 3668). Motivated by jealousy of Lunete's privileged status as Laudine's counsellor and confidante, he has her condemned on a false charge of treason. In the saga it is the seneschal (*ráðgjafi*) himself who is doubly guilty: of criminal envy and treasonable action. His hatred for Lúneta, moreover, is motivated not by envy but by the knowledge that she has been made privy to his shameful actions:

Ok sem hennar ráðsmaðr, sá er jafnan hafði stólit hana sínu gózi, fann at hann mátti mér hefna því at ek vissi hans löstu, svá sem frú mín hafði sagt mér, hataði hann mik nú af illu hjarta ok vill nú láta drepa mik. (p. 76)

(And when her steward, the one who was constantly stealing her property, realized that he could avenge himself on me for knowing of his misdeeds, since my lady had told me about this, he hated me now with his evil heart, and now he wants to have me killed.) (p. 77)

The threat posed to Laudine's realm by the seneschal's immorality and incompetence is potentially a more damaging threat to its well-being and prosperity than Arthur's declared intention to see for himself its prized magical spring (lines 665–68).

When, determined to effect a reconciliation with Laudine, Yvain raises a storm at the spring which threatens to topple the towers of her castle, its terrified inhabitants curse their ancestors for founding such a loathsome place. The situation is dire. The realm is without effective management, or indeed any management at all, since the seneschal has been executed after Yvain successfully champions Lunete in judicial combat. The only possible course of action, Lunete tells Laudine, is to take good counsel. Playfully, she prolongs her mistress's distress by briefly abrogating her role as counsellor, because, she says, the situation requires more expert counsel than she can give:

'Tu,' fet la dame, 'qui tant sez
Me di, comant j'an panserai,
Et je a ton los an ferai.'
'Dame! certes, se je savoie.
Volantiers vos conseileroie;
Mes vos avriiez grant mestier
De plus resnable conseillier.
Por ce si ne m'an os mesler,
Et le plovoir et le vanter
Avuec les austres soferrai.' (lines 6576–85)

('You who are so clever,' said her lady, 'tell me what I should do about it, and I'll follow your advice.'

'Indeed, my lady, if I had a solution I would gladly offer it; but you need a much wiser counsellor than I. Therefore I don't dare interfere, and I'll endure the rain and wind along with everyone else.') (p. 377)

For the faithful Lúneta, however, this is no time for coquetry. Her lady has asked for advice and she is ready to give it:

‘Ok af því at þú ert vitr, þá gef nú góð ráð til [...]’ Hún sagði: ‘Guð gefi at vér mætlim þann vaska riddara finna, er götuninn drap ok sigraðiz einn á þrim riddurum ok leónit fylgir.’ (p. 96)

(‘And since you are wise, give me now good advice [...]’ She said: ‘God grant that we find the valiant knight who killed the giant and alone vanquished three knights and whom the lion accompanies.’) (p. 97)

Once again, Lunete/Lúneta’s strategy serves the public and private good: the realm is saved, the lady is reconciled with her estranged husband, and the couple live happily ever after.

Yvain and *Erec et Enide* are often considered as a narrative pair in which a knight expiates some fault of *courtoisie*. They might also be said to constitute twin narratives from another viewpoint, in that the key figure in both is a woman who gives wise counsel: Lunete/Lúneta in *Yvain/Ívens saga* and Enide/Evida in *Erec et Enide/Exex saga*. In the following discussion, *Exex saga* and *Strengleikar* are twinned as a pair of codicological bookends. *Strengleikar* is preserved in the earliest surviving *riddarasögur* codex; with the exception of two fragments from around 1500, *Exex saga* is preserved only in manuscripts from the seventeenth century and later, and has the latest textual tradition of all the translated *riddarasögur*.³⁴

The radical changes which *Strengleikar* and *Exex saga* make to their originals by the addition of new content — two chapters at the end of *Strengleikar* and a new episode in *Exex saga*³⁵ — make them unusual within the *riddarasögur* corpus. In addition, substantial stylistic differences with other translated *riddarasögur* place *Exex saga* outside the generally accepted ‘Tristram-Group’ (*Elis saga*, *Ívens saga*, *Möttuls saga*, *Parcevals saga*, *Strengleikar*, *Tristrams saga*, *Valvers þáttr*).³⁶ The question is whether, despite the distance in time and location which separate the manuscript traditions of *Strengleikar* and *Exex*, the two works share an underlying strain of ideology which extends beyond evidence of likely clerical

³⁴ On manuscripts of *Exex saga*, see ‘Introduction’, *Exex Saga Artuskappa*, ed. by Foster W. Blaisdell, Editiones Arnarnaganae, B 19 (Copenhagen: Munksgaard, 1965).

³⁵ See Foster W. Blaisdell, ‘The Composition of the Interpolated Chapter in the *Exex saga*’, *Scandinavian Studies*, 36 (1964), 118–26.

³⁶ First identified as such on the basis of shared stylistic features by Peter Hallberg in ‘Norröna riddarsagor: Några språkdrag’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 86 (1971), 114–37.

authorship or 'medieval commonplace'.³⁷ A larger issue that demands consideration is whether any such shared ethos links the distance between production in Norway and copying in Iceland in the wider *riddarasögur* corpus.

Independent of any known written source, though in tune with the rhetoric of the introductory words to John of Salisbury's *Policraticus*, the first section of the two-part *Strengleikar* Prologue — often referred to as the 'translator's Prologue' — draws upon the authority of the past to amend the present and the future, and ends with a dedication to the collection's patron, Hákon Hákonarson. The translator begins by praising men of former days, who are said to be models of conduct because they were, among other attributes (skilled, sharp-witted, valiant, courteous, generous), 'thoughtful in counsel' (*hygnir i raðagerðom*). In committing the deeds of such men to writing, scholars of earlier times are lauded for providing the means for present and future generations to live worthily and to make a good end:

þa syndizc oss at fræða verande ok viðrkomande þeim sogum er margfræðer menn gærðo um athæve þeirra sem i fyrnskunni varo ok a bokom leto rita. til ævenlægrar aminningar til skæmtanar. ok margfræðes viðr komande þioða at huerr bæte ok birte sitt lif. af kunnasto liðenna luta [...] at bua ok bæta sialvan sec til rikis guðs með somasamlegum siðum ok goðom athævom ok hælgom lifsænda. (p. 4)

(it occurred to us to teach men living and those to come those stories, which men of great learning made about the deeds of those who lived in olden days, and which they had written down in books as an everlasting reminder, as entertainment, and as a source of great learning for posterity, so that each man could amend and illumine his life with the knowledge of past events [...] and prepare and improve himself for the kingdom of God by means of fitting behavior and good deeds and a holy life's end.) (p. 5)³⁸

The opening of the *Policraticus* expresses similar admiration for the industrious writers of the past:

³⁷ 'In *Erex saga* one suspects a cleric at work because of the addition of a number of didactic comments with religious overtones': *Erex saga and Ivens saga: The Old Norse Versions of Chrétien de Troyes's Erec and Yvain*, trans. by Foster W. Blaisdell, Jr, and Marianne E. Kalinke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1977), p. xii.

³⁸ All quotations from and references to *Strengleikar*, and English translations, are from *Strengleikar: An Old Norse Translation of Twenty-one Old French Lais*, ed. by Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane, Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-institutt: Norrøne tekster, 3 (Oslo: Norsk Historisk Kjeldeskrift-institutt, 1979).

The experience of our ancestors [*exempla maiorum*], ever incentives and aids to virtue, would never have inspired or saved a single soul, had not the loyalty, zeal, and diligence of writers triumphing over sloth transmitted them to posterity. (*Policraticus*, Prol. 1, 12)³⁹

In representing the *Lais* as exemplary history, the *Strengleikar* translator's Prologue conforms to a widespread belief in the Middle Ages about the practical value of past example, particularly for kings and princes.⁴⁰ In this respect, the work's stated mission is at odds with the fifty-six-line Prologue to Marie's *Lais*, which concentrates not on the moral efficacy of past texts but on the question of encoding and decoding them, and on the duty of present-day writers to elucidate them.

The second section of the *Strengleikar* Prologue is a slightly amplified translation of Marie's. It follows a similar structure and length to the first: wise men from the past committed knowledge to writing; there is a qualitative difference between the accomplishments of the present and those of the past; a royal patron is acknowledged. The twin prologues to the *Strengleikar* might therefore be read as politely competing mission statements which approach the interpretation of texts from two different rhetorical and ethical positions — instructive in the first case and exegetical in the second. If the *Strengleikar* translator's Prologue is not exactly a 'reply' to Marie's, it offers an interesting alternative perspective on the moral obligations of the producers and custodians of the written word.⁴¹

Among Marie's *Lais*, the 'doggedly didactic'⁴² tone of *Equitan* turns the inversion of courtly convention in this tale of royal irresponsibility, adultery, and contemplated homicide into the most overtly exemplary *lai* in the collection. Both *lai* and *ljóð* tell of the powerful lord Equitan, who eschews his administrative responsibilities in favour of hunting and amorous play, and who contrives the death of his loyal seneschal as a means of proving his love for his vassal's wife. The plot backfires when, surprised in his mistress's bed by the seneschal, the flustered Equitan leaps into the boiling bath which he has prepared for his unsuspecting

³⁹ *Frivolities of Courtiers and Footprints of Philosophers*, trans. by Joseph B. Pike (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1938), p. 6; cited and discussed in Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, pp. 90–91.

⁴⁰ See Green, *Poets and Princepleasers*, pp. 137–40.

⁴¹ As Cook and Tveitane remark of Marie's Prologue in their edition and translation: 'The old stories are not so much models of behavior as literary texts to be re-examined and commented on with improved understanding' (*Strengleikar*, p. 2).

⁴² *The Lais of Marie de France*, intro. and trans. by Robert Hanning and Joan Ferrante (New York: Dutton, 1978), p. 69. For a discussion of the use of courtly convention in the *lai* of *Equitan*, see p. 70. Quotations in English are from this source.

vassal. Marie's *Equitan* ends on a sternly proverbial note which warns of the consequences of contriving misfortune for another:

Ki bien vodreit reisun entendre
 Ici purreit ensample prendre:
 Tels purcace le mal d'autrui
 Dunt tuz li mals revert sur lui.⁴³

That cautionary note is amplified in *Equitans ljóð* into a two-chapter addendum which tilts the balance between courtly inversion and moral exemplarity towards full-blown exemplum. As Robert Cook and Mattias Tveitane observe of the translator, '[t]he allusions to Scripture, the reference to St. Augustine, and the general homiletic tone of this passage indicate that he was a cleric. He seems to have responded to the invitation of his source to treat the story as an *ensample* [...] and explicated it in the manner of a medieval preacher commenting on an *exemplum*'.⁴⁴

The exemplum in question illustrates a topic popular with *Fürstenspiegel* writers, the abuse of secular authority by a *rex iniquus*.⁴⁵ In its condemnation of the sins of covetousness and envy, expatiation upon God's capacity to turn contemplated misdeeds upon their encompasser, and stress upon the importance of atonement ('þui at ækki tær þæim i æilivu livi er hafna at bætazc i þæssu livi', p. 80; 'For in the eternal life nothing will avail those who refuse to atone in this life', p. 81) the first chapter amplifies Marie's statement that the story is about the backfiring of evil actions. Such actions are exemplified by the eternal punishment of the rich man who refused Lazarus the crumbs from his table (Luke 16. 19–31) — a figure reminiscent of the Pseudo-Cyprian's fourth *abusio*, the *dives sine elemosyna* ('the rich man without charity') whose greed leads to eternal damnation (pp. 38–40).

In foregrounding the consequences of the private betrayal of a loyal servant by a ruler, the second chapter of the addendum to *Equitans ljóð* moves into the public sphere of government, since *Equitan*'s treachery towards his best friend

⁴³ *Les Lais de Marie de France*, ed. by Jean Rychner (Paris: Champion, 1966), 'Equitan', lines 307–10.

Whoever wants to hear some sound advice
 can profit from this example:
 he who plans evil for another
 may have that evil rebound back on him. (p. 68)

⁴⁴ *Strengleikar*, p. 65.

⁴⁵ Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, p. 81.

(*villdasta vin sinn*) marks him as a *rex iniquus*.⁴⁶ As a man who served his lord with wholesome and astute advice (*goðom raðom oc rettom raðom*), managed the affairs of his domain, and kept him free from care, Equitan's seneschal fulfils the criteria of the model counsellor in the *Konungs skuggsjá*: morally upright, mature, discreet, and wise. The *Konungs skuggsjá* spells out in terms similar to *Equitans ljóð* the public and private harm which the loss of such a counsellor brings to a king and his realm:⁴⁷ 'þa hæfir konongr mist goðs vinar. margra hollræða mikels lifðar vapns' (p. 52/11–12); 'the king has lost a good friend, an excellent adviser, and a strong bulwark' (p. 196). Finally, for breaking the holy bond of matrimony for her lover's promises of worldly wealth, Equitan's mistress is condemned for the *avaritia* and *cupiditas* which typify the *femina sine pudicitia* ('the woman without modesty') in the *Pseudo-Cyprian*.

Just as *Equitans ljóð* emphasizes the key role of the good counsellor in good government, *Erex saga* also diverges from its source in stressing the fundamental importance of a ruler's counsellors. Take its initial references to Erex and Artús. In *Erec et Enide*, Erec is introduced simply as the subject of the story (*D'Erec, le fil Lac, est li contes*, line 19); in *Erex saga*, on the other hand — and probably on the model of the *douze peres* of Charlemagne⁴⁸ — the hero is initially identified as one of Artús's twelve wise men and counsellors (*tólf spekingar hans ok ráðgjafar*):

Með honum váru tólf spekingar hans ok ráðgjafar, er sátu at hans kringlóttu borði. Einn af þeim var sonr Ilax kóngs.

(And with him were his twelve wise men and counsellors who sat at his round table. One of them was the son of King Ilax.)⁴⁹

Two other figures in the saga are distinguished by their role as counsellor: Erex's wife, Evida (Fr. Enide), and Artús himself. Evida's role, like Enide's, is limited for the most part to the diffident alerting of Erec to danger as she accompanies him on a quest apparently intended to dispel the doubts of his peers about the effect of marriage upon his knightly capability and his own about her fidelity. The saga

⁴⁶ On the private code of morality expected of rulers in the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition, see Bagge, *Political Thought*, p. 99.

⁴⁷ See Bagge, *Political Thought*, pp. 162, 177–79.

⁴⁸ In the prefatory statement to the vellum fragment, Lbs. 1230 III 8° (c. 1500) Erex is introduced as *einn af tólfköppum Artús kóngs*. See *Norse Romance*, vol. II: *The Knights of the Round Table*, ed. and trans. by Marianne Kalinke (Cambridge: Brewer, 1999), pp. 222, 260n.

⁴⁹ *Erex Saga*, ed. by Kalinke, in *Norse Romance*, II, 222. Unless otherwise indicated, subsequent references and quotations in English are from this edition.

redactor seizes upon narrative opportunities to foreground Evida's status as moral instructor. When, for example, Enide attracts the unwelcome attentions of a certain count Galoain (ON Milon), who has murder on his mind for Erec and lust in his heart for her, she repels his advances with an impassioned declaration of her unassailable virtue:

He! miauz fusse je or a nestre,
Ou an un feu d'espines arse
Si que la çandre fust esparsé,
Que j'eüsse de rien faussé
Vers mon seignor, ne anpansé
Felenie ne traïson. (lines 3336–41)

(Ah! Better that I were not yet born, or burned in a fire of thorns so that my ashes might be scattered, than that I should in any way be false towards my lord, or wickedly contemplate disloyalty or treason!) (p. 78)⁵⁰

Evida, on the other hand, parries with a speech which reminds Milon of his duty as a ruler appointed by God to uphold the Christian faith, punish the wrongdoer, and protect the sanctity of marriage:

Þú ert ríkr höfðingi ok af guð skipaðr at hefja hans kristni ok refsa ranglátum, en ek em bundin í helgum hjúskap, ok munt þú eigi vilka ræna skaparann tveimr sálum senn ok kaupa þér ok mér helvíti. (p. 240)

(You are a powerful chieftain and appointed by God to promote His Christianity and punish the unrighteous, but I am bound in holy matrimony, and you would not want to rob the Creator of two souls at once and in return earn eternal hell for you and me.) (p. 241)

Evida homes in here on the most important duty of a king as articulated in the *Konungs skuggsjá*: to act as the righteous judge of capital crimes.⁵¹ To abuse that divine authority to personal ends is, moreover, to commit murder:

Hanum hævir Guð oc ihændr sællt ræfsingar sværd þat er hann skal hogga mæð er þarf [. . .]. Nu skal konongr hogga hværn utan avund mæð rætti ræfsing. En hværn er hann dræpr firi avundar sacar þa er þat mandrap oc a hann at svara mandraps soc firi guði. (p. 124/4–9)

(Into his hands God has also committed the sword of punishment with which to strike when the need arises [. . .]. The king, then, must always strike, not in hatred but for

⁵⁰ References to and quotations from Chrétien's *Erec* are from *Kristian von Troyes: Erec und Enide*, ed. by Wendelin Foerster (Halle: Max Niemeyer, 1934). English translations and quotations are from *Chrétien de Troyes: Arthurian Romances*, trans. by Kibler.

⁵¹ Bagge, *Political Thought*, pp. 53–85.

righteous punishment. But if he slay any one out of hatred, it is murder, and he will have to answer for it as murder before God.) (p. 359)

Forewarned by Enide, Erec makes his escape from the homicidal count and eventually overcomes him in combat. Galoain acknowledges in general terms that woe was bound to befall him ('Bien m'an devoit maus avenir: | Sor moi an est venuz li maus', lines 3648–49), but Milon attributes his defeat explicitly to the just judgement of God: 'Guð hefir réttum dómi yfir oss komit'. Reinforcing the exemplary quality of this episode in the saga is the appearance of a new member of Milon's company who pursues Erex and Evida: his chief counsellor Bolvin. When Erex slays Bolvin, Milon laments not only his sin in encompassing the death of Erex and the dishonouring of Evida but also the retributive loss of his chief counsellor ('minn ætzi ráðgjafi er dauðr', p. 242).

The place of mercy in judgement has previously been exemplified in the saga by another female character, Artús's unnamed queen, who passes sentence on the first of Erex's defeated opponents, Malpirant (Fr. Yder). Malpirant's shameful treatment of Erex and a maiden of the royal retinue is judged to be a capital offence, and the queen's verdict is a demonstration of the triumph of charity over vengeance:

Dróttning mælti: 'Sannliga ertu dauðr verðr [...] ok ert engrar miskunnar verðr fyrir af oss. En af því at þat er mestr sigra reiði sjálfs síns en hjálpa óverðugum þeim er þarf, þá stattu upp, riddari, með þeim fylgð, ok skaltu vera hér velkomunn.' (p. 232)

(The queen spoke: 'Certainly you are worthy of death for the disgrace your dwarf brought on my maiden and my knight, and you are not worthy of receiving mercy from us. But since it is the greatest victory to overcome one's own anger and help those unworthy but in need, stand up, knight, with your retinue, and be welcome here.') (p. 223)

In *Erec*, on the other hand, Guenevere responds to Yder's surrender with non-judgemental brevity:

Cortoisemant li dist: 'Amis!
Des que an ma merci t'es mis,
Plus an iert ta prisons legiere:
N'ai talant que nul mal te quiere. (lines 1207–10)

(couteously said to him: 'Friend, since you have surrendered yourself as my prisoner, your sentence will be very light; I have no wish that evil should befall you.') (p. 52)

Artús bestrides *Erex saga* as a colossus of monarchal justice and humility. Whereas Artur's heart is gladdened ('Mout an fu liez an son corage', line 2016) by the spectacle of the vast number of nobles summoned to Erec's wedding from throughout

his empire, Artús reflects at greater length upon the moral significance of this imperial panorama:

Ok er kóngr leit yfir þetta fjölmenni, þykkir honum mikit sitt vald ok megn, er mikill hlutr heimsins skal undir hann þjóna ok mektugir höfðingjar; ok glez nú í sínu hjarta en miklar sik eigi af þegnavaldi. (p. 234)

(And when the king looked over this great crowd, his power and might seemed great to him, since such a large part of the world is subject to him as well as mighty chieftains; and he now rejoices in his heart but does not pride himself on account of his power over vassals.) (p. 235)

Artús here personifies the ideal king of the *Konungs skuggsjá*, who, at his zenith, contemplates his magnificence with justice, sobriety, humility, and moderation — and ponders how best to maintain it:

Þat var siðr forðum þann tíma er konongdomr var skipaðr oc hann stoð mæðr fægrrstum bloma. at þægar konongr sat [...] ifullu frialsi mæð hirð sinni. that æinkaðe hann til þæss æitt agetlect hus at lata þar sætia í hasætti sitt [...] oc let þat sæti væl bua mæð kononglegri tign allri. Siðan sættiz þar konongr í oc hugsaðe hann that hværso agetliga oc haleitliga hann sat. því næst hugum leiddi hann þat hværso hann mætti þærs sitia isva ageto sæti at hann væri æigi mæðr noccori haðung brot runndinn or því sæti annat hvart firi sacar ranglætis eða illzku. skamsynis eða folsko eða of mikkillar blævpji eða of drambs eða of mykillar yvir girnþar þo at hann se haleitliga sættr. (p. 98/3–11)

(It was the custom of old at the time when the royal office was established and enjoyed its greatest splendor, that, when a king [...] sat in complete security among his henchmen, he selected a splendid house where he could set up his high-seat [...] and this throne he adorned with every form of royal decoration. Then the king sat down upon it and observed in what glory and splendor he sat. Next he began to ponder in what way he must occupy this glorious high-seat, so as not to be driven from it with dishonor in spite of his exalted position either because of injustice or malice, indiscretion or folly, inordinate ambition, arrogance or excessive timidity.) (p. 299)

Artur's role in *Erec* is solely to command, but when, with quest fulfilled and knightly reputation enhanced, Erex returns to the court, Artús actively assumes the role of counsellor, advising him to rest and then to secure his own kingdom, which has become vulnerable to attack following the death of his father. Erex thanks Artús for his wise counsel ('Erex þakkar honum vel sín heilræði', p. 258), successfully carries it out, and then returns to his court to be crowned. Whereas Chrétien ends his narrative with Erec's coronation, the saga's conclusion leaves us with an idealized image of fulfilled rulership in which Erex and Evida govern 'með sæmð ok heiðri ok fullum friði' (p. 258; 'with honor and glory and in complete peace', p. 259).

The didactic overlay of *Erex saga* has been attributed to generalized clerical influence. But do the work's 'sermonizing tone' and 'didactic comments with

religious overtones'⁵² extend to a more fully integrated ethos? The nature of those comments, which focus on the proper exercise of justice, the taking of good advice, and the moral standards expected of rulers, invites a reading of *Erex saga* as a story about good governance which emphasizes the necessity for moderation and humility among those in authority, precisely those virtues for rulers discussed and exemplified in the *Konungs skuggsjá* ('guð vil mæð skylldu heimta hof oc sannsyni litillæti oc retlæti oc tryggleic af þeim sām hann hæfr til sœmdar', p. 70/11–12; 'God demands moderation and fairness, humility, justice, and fidelity as a duty from those whom he raises to honor', p. 240) and endorsed by the conclusion to *Equitans ljóð*.⁵³

The stamp of the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition is discernible in all the above *riddara-sögur*. *Equitans ljóð*, *Parcevals saga*, and *Erex saga* are in some way concerned with public morality and authority. *Equitans ljóð*, *Ívens saga*, and *Erex saga* focus on the fundamental role of *consilium et auxilium* in just and effective rulership. *Parcevals saga*, *Ívens saga*, and *Erex saga* address the acquisition of good judgement through the acceptance of wise counsel. It may seem curious that the work with the latest manuscript tradition, *Erex saga*, should display such a concern with the conduct of rulers. If the present narrative content of this saga is of substantially Icelandic provenance,⁵⁴ the question of the independent influence of the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition on Icelandic redactors and scribes from the fifteenth century on needs to be addressed. It is time to consider the fortunes of the *Konungs skuggsjá* in post-Commonwealth Iceland.

Post-Commonwealth Iceland and the Fürstenspiegel

The constitutional changes of 1271 and 1281 replaced Iceland's *goðar* and *höfðingar* ('chieftains') with administrators appointed either directly or indirectly by the Norwegian king: twelve sheriffs (*sýslumenn*); two 'lawmen' (*lögmen*); and the

⁵² *Erex saga and Ívens saga*, trans. by Blaisdell and Kalinke, pp. 128, 129.

⁵³ A not dissimilar pattern of scribal addition appears throughout the copy of the Cook's Tale in the fifteenth-century English manuscript Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Bodley 686, where scribal additions go beyond 'rudimentary moralizing' to refigure the narrative from beginning to end as exemplum about governance and misgovernance. Daniel J. Pinti, 'Governing the Cook's Tale in Bodley 686', *Chaucer Review*, 30 (1996), 379–88 (p. 380).

⁵⁴ For a recent discussion of the textual state of *Erex saga*, see Kramarz-Bein, *Die Þiðreks saga im Kontext der altnorwegischen Literatur*, pp. 289–303.

hirðstjóri ('court ruler'), the leader of the vice-regal retinue.⁵⁵ The great majority of *lögmenn* and *sýslumenn* were Icelanders.⁵⁶ Service in the royal administration offered a career for men who were not necessarily descendants of the old chieftain class but who had 'an acceptable economic and social background'.⁵⁷ The post-Commonwealth period also saw the rise of another prominent group: fishing industry entrepreneurs. These socially elite circles are likely to have been the chief patrons and audiences of both 'serious' and 'entertaining' literature.⁵⁸ Several *riddarasögur* manuscripts, for instance, come from the rich fishing area of the Vestfirðingafjörðungur, where descendants of the former chieftain class owned manor houses.⁵⁹

Most of the approximately sixty manuscripts which preserve the *Konungs skuggsjá* are Icelandic.⁶⁰ As Ludwig Holm-Olsen has noted, whereas the original audience of the *Konungs skuggsjá* appears to have been small, '[t]hings seem to have been different in Iceland [...]. *Konungs skuggsiá* was popular in wide circles there from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries onwards'.⁶¹ The reasons for this, inasmuch as they can be surmised, may lie in the changing relationship between Iceland and Norway in the post-Commonwealth period. For fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Icelanders who were members of or aspirants to royal service, the practical advice and insights into the nature of the royal office and court mores which it offered to prospective *hirðmenn* may have caused the *Konungs skuggsjá* to be perceived as a useful work of reference and instruction. During the reign of Magnús Eiríksson (1319–43) Icelandic *sýslumenn* and *hirðstjórar*

⁵⁵ See Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Icelandic Aristocracy after the Fall of the Free State', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, 20 (1995), 153–61.

⁵⁶ See Gunnar Karlsson, *Iceland's 1100 Years: History of a Marginal Society* (London: Hurst, 2000), pp. 92–95.

⁵⁷ Jón Viðar Sigurðsson, 'The Icelandic Aristocracy', p. 158.

⁵⁸ See Jürg Glauser, *Isländische Märchensagas: Studien zur Prosaliteratur im spätmittelalterlichen Island*, Beiträge zur nordischen Philologie, 12 (Basel: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1983), pp. 61–78, 227.

⁵⁹ See Glauser, *Isländische Märchensagas*, pp. 75–76.

⁶⁰ The oldest, AM 243 b fol, is a Norwegian manuscript of the late thirteenth century. On the manuscripts of the *Konungs skuggsjá*, see Ludvig Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá: En undersøkelse av deres tekstkritiske verdi* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1952); see also Holm-Olsen's Introduction to his edition, *Konungs Skuggsiá*, pp. xi–xix.

⁶¹ Holm-Olsen, 'The Prologue to the *Konungs skuggsjá*', p. 235.

frequently travelled to Norway.⁶² A marginal note in a younger hand to the earliest Icelandic manuscript of the *Konungs skuggsjá*, the mid-fourteenth-century AM 243 g fol, suggests that it may have been copied at dictation at a later date by Ormr Loptsson of Staðarhóll (in Dalasýsla) and Víðidalstunga (in Vestur-Húnavatnssýsla), *hirðstjóri* of northern and western Iceland in 1436.⁶³ Þorvarðr Erlendsson, *lögmaðr* from 1499 to c. 1510, who had an estate in Norway, was at one time the owner of the fifteenth-century *Konungs skuggsjá* manuscript, AM 243 a fol;⁶⁴ and the copy of the *Konungs skuggsjá* in GKS 1913 4°, written in 1571, was, according to a manuscript note which identifies him as *Sofren Islandz kongs fogt* ('the sovereign king of Iceland's bailiff'), in the possession of the Faroese *lagmann* Peder Jacobsen in 1593.⁶⁵

There is evidence of familiarity with both *Konungs skuggsjá* and translated *rid-darasögur* among the families of two Icelanders prominent in the extensive copying of medieval manuscripts during the seventeenth century.⁶⁶ The manuscripts AM 181a-b fol (c. 1650), which include the earliest complete text of *Erex saga* (AM 181b fol) and copies of *Ívens saga* and *Parcevals saga* (AM 181a fol), were 'produced for and by' Þorsteinn Björnsson (c. 1612–75), priest of Útskálar from 1638 to 1660.⁶⁷ Þorsteinn's daughter, Þóra, gave the seventeenth-century AM 243 r fol, which has extracts from the *Konungs skuggsjá*, to Arni Magnússon.⁶⁸ Magnús Jónsson of Vigur (1637–1702)⁶⁹ commissioned the manuscript of *Sverris*

⁶² There seems to have been something of a revival of royal interest in Iceland as a source of revenue at this time. See Elizabeth Ashman Rowe, *The Development of Flateyjarbók: Iceland and the Norwegian Dynastic Crisis of 1389*, Viking Collection, 15 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2005), pp. 94–95.

⁶³ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, p. 51. Ormr was the son of Loptr ríki Guttormsson (d. 1432), whose circle was the origin of many manuscripts of Icelandic *rid-darasögur* (see Glauser, *Isländische Märchensagas*, p. 72).

⁶⁴ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, pp. 14–15.

⁶⁵ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, p. 68.

⁶⁶ See Peter Springborg, 'Antiqvæ historiae leporis – om renæssancen i den islandske håndskriftproduktion i 1600-tallet', *Gardar*, 8 (1977), 53–89.

⁶⁷ *Möttuls saga*, ed. by Marianne E. Kalinke, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, B 30 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1987), p. cviii. See *Ívens saga*, ed. by Foster W. Blaisdell, Editiones Arnamagnæanæ, B 18 (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1979), pp. cix–cx.

⁶⁸ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, p. 65.

⁶⁹ On Magnús Jónsson, see Springborg, 'Antiqvæ historiae leporis', pp. 81–86.

saga and *Konungs skuggsjá* now in the Sýslubókasafn Skagfirðinga,⁷⁰ as well as London, British Library, Additional MS 4857 (1669–70), which contains a copy of *Ívens saga*, and London, British Library, Additional MS 4859 (1693–96), in which *Erex saga*, *Ívens saga*, *Parcevals saga*, *Valvers þáttur*, and *Möttuls saga* are preserved.⁷¹

The presence, in different hands, of individual alphabet letters and verses from Icelandic psalms in the margins of the *Konungs skuggsjá* text in AM 243 f fol (c. 1500) suggests that this manuscript served another function in seventeenth-century Iceland: as an exercise book for people teaching themselves to write. The circumstances of the manuscript's production are unknown, but Arni Magnusson acquired it from Guðríður Gísladóttir (d. 1707), widow of Bishop Þorðr Þorláksson of Skálholt, and there are indications that it may have been in the possession of the wives and daughters of other priests and bishops in the early seventeenth century.⁷² Other women are also linked to Icelandic manuscripts of the *Konungs skuggsjá*. Ownership of GKS 1913 4° (written in 1571) is attributed to Halldóra Sigurðardóttir, probably the granddaughter of the priest Sigurður Jónsson of Grenjaðarstaðir.⁷³

Exclusivity is, after all, precisely what the *Konungs skuggsjá* eschews in its Prologue. For Icelandic audiences in the immediate post-Commonwealth era the work may have had perceived practical value as a reference book of royal protocol and social etiquette; later it may have achieved the dual status of canonical treatise of social and moral instruction and text of antiquarian interest. Clearly, the *Konungs skuggsjá* had a wide circulation in Iceland, and it can be assumed that successive commissioners and copyists of translated *riddarasögur* from the fifteenth century on would have had at least a passing familiarity with the work.

Something of a parallel to this perforce fragmentary textual history of the *Konungs skuggsjá* is the reception by subsequent generations of readers of Thomas Hoccleve's *Regiment of Princes* (1410), a *Fürstenspiegel* written for Henry, Prince of Wales, two years before he became Henry V of England. The *Regiment* is preserved in forty-three complete manuscripts and two fragments dating from the fifteenth to the beginning of the sixteenth century, ownership of which indicates a broadening of the work's perceived social relevance. The audience of vernacular

⁷⁰ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, p. 97.

⁷¹ *Ívens saga*, ed. by Blaisdell, pp. cxvii and cxlii–cxliii.

⁷² On all these features of AM 243 f fol, see Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, pp. 46–48.

⁷³ Holm-Olsen, *Håndskriftene av Konungs skuggsjá*, p. 68.

literature in England by the beginning of the fifteenth century included those who, according to Nicholas Perkins, 'were interested not only in romance and devotional literature, but in philosophical and political writing, too'.⁷⁴ The *Regiment's* later readership were bureaucrats and clerics and, Perkins argues, the poem was refocussed 'towards individual self-fashioning and moral education, rather than towards the exercise of royal authority or image-making'.⁷⁵

Recent scholarship has demonstrated the function of the discourse of counsel in other medieval Icelandic texts. Elizabeth Rowe, for example, argues that Jón Þórðarson, compiler of the *Flateyjarbók* (GKS 1005 fol) redactions of *Olafs saga Tryggvasonar* and *Olafs saga helga*, used the medium of the *þettir* which he added to these two sagas as implicit models of advice for the 'ethical consumption' of Óláfr Hákonarson (r. 1380–87)⁷⁶ and cites Ármann Jakobsson's postulation of a similar purpose for the *þettir* of *Morkinskinna* — as demonstrations for Icelanders about how to behave at court.⁷⁷ In suggesting that the 'young' *Hrólfs saga kraka*, of which the oldest manuscript dates from the first half of the seventeenth century, deliberately parodies courtly propriety as articulated by the *Konungs skuggsjá* and *Hirðskrá*, Valgerður Brynjólfssdóttir identifies a less reverential form of evidence for the continuing influence of the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition.⁷⁸

Gerd Weber postulated that such common ground as there is between French chivalric romance and their Norse reworkings lies in the primitive narrative pattern of folktale (for example, the bridal quest and 'young redeemer of a kingdom' in the stories of Tristan and Perceval respectively).⁷⁹ I do not dispute that Weber was right in his assertion that the origins of these two stories, and of other medieval romances, are ultimately mythological (the story of the lady of the fountain which forms the basis of *Yvain/Ivens saga* is an obvious case in point), but I would also argue that there is a shared seam of ideology in *roman courtois* and translated *riddarasaga* which goes beyond the rituals and conceits of courtly love

⁷⁴ Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes*, p. 160.

⁷⁵ Perkins, *Hoccleve's Regiment of Princes*, p. 177 and, for a full discussion, pp. 171–77.

⁷⁶ Rowe, *Development of Flateyjarbók*, pp. 52, 56.

⁷⁷ Rowe, *Development of Flateyjarbók*, p. 53.

⁷⁸ Valgerður Brynjólfssdóttir, 'A Valiant King or a Coward? The Changing Image of King Hrólfr Kraki From the Oldest Sources to *Hrólfs saga kraka*', in *Fornaldarsagornas struktur och ideologi: Handlingar från ett symposium i Uppsala 31.8–2.9 2001*, ed. by Ármann Jakobsson, Annette Lassen, and Agneta Ney, Nordiska Texter och Undersökningar, 28 (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, Institutionen för nordiska språk, 2003), pp. 150–51.

⁷⁹ Weber, 'Decadence of Feudal Myth,' p. 426.

to the fundamental principles of ideal rulership and of chivalry: generosity, justice, the heeding of beneficent counsel. From this perspective the translated *riddarasögur* might be viewed as examples of what Jan Assman calls 'syncretistic translation',⁸⁰ whereby a common cultural background — in this instance the discourse of counsel — mediates the *translatio* of Old French romance into Old Norse saga.

This is not to say that any of those works are themselves *Fürstenspiegel* but simply to stress the widespread influence of that literary mode. As Margaret Clunies Ross was careful to point out in her landmark *Skáldskaparmál*, evidence of the influence of medieval encyclopedic notions of science on Snorri's *Edda* does not mean that Snorri's method is to 'force his version of Norse mythology into a rigid encyclopedic mould'.⁸¹ Similarly in the case of the translated *riddarasögur* and medieval advice literature, the question is one of the influence of ideas, not of rigidly imposed form, and the process is the application of one form of thinking (the nature of ideal secular authority) in order to explicate another (the practice and meaning of chivalry).

The medieval discourse of counsel, as exemplified by the *Fürstenspiegel* tradition, provides a common cultural frame of reference for the composers of twelfth-century French romance and their thirteenth-century Norwegian translators. The continued popularity in Iceland over the next four centuries of that tradition's best-known expression in Scandinavia, the *Konungs skuggsjá*, extends that frame of reference for copyists and audiences of the translated *riddarasögur* into the seventeenth century. This is not, I emphasize, to argue that the *Konungs skuggsjá* itself provided the model for any or all of the narratives discussed above, but to suggest that *riddarasögur* writers and subsequent generations of patrons, scribes, and audiences were attuned to the discourse of counsel as an important mode of medieval thought which continued to be of practical and antiquarian interest in post-Reformation Iceland.

⁸⁰ See Jan Assman, 'Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability', in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. by Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), pp. 33–36. Assman's prime example is the translation of Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Syrian, Babylonian into the common semiotic system of 'Hellenism' as signifier of 'paganism' for Judaeo-Christian culture.

⁸¹ Clunies Ross, *Skáldskaparmál*, p. 158

VATNSDÆLA SAGA: VISIONS AND VERSIONS

Andrew Wawn

This essay is a contribution to the reception history of *Vatnsdæla saga*, a work whose echoes have been more prolonged than most. The present writer first became a reader and receiver of the saga on the banks of Vatnsdalsá in northern Iceland some twenty years ago during a fishing trip, all the time under relentless attack from a pair of arctic terns. Though the work remains one of the longest and least celebrated in the *Íslendingasögur* corpus, it was not difficult even on a first reading to identify its finest scene — that in which the ill-starred Hrolleifr kills his well-meaning protector, the benevolent patriarch Ingimundr *goði*.¹ That same scene also caught the eye of three earlier readers — Sabine Baring-Gould (1834–1924), Halldór Briem (1852–1929), and Benjamin H.J. Eiríksson (1910–2000) — and it is their responses that are the subject of this paper.² Each of them travelled among the saga-steads of Ingimundr’s family, friends, and foes; each has contributed distinctively to the reception of *Vatnsdæla saga*; and, at first sight, each seems to belong to a group known in Iceland as *neftóbaksfræðingar* (literally, ‘snuffscholars’ — enthusiastic amateur scholars). Yet, my recent discovery of unpublished manuscript material in the Devon Record Office confirms that this (in itself honourable) soubriquet does scant justice to the achievements of at least one of them, Sabine Baring-Gould. Photographs of the saintly looking Anglo-Catholic priest in his latter years do indeed reveal evidence of powder-stained lapels, but they fail to hint at the status to which the

¹ *Vatnsdæla saga*, ed. by Einar Ólafur Sveinsson, Íslensk fornrit, 8 (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 1939), pp. 56–65 (chs 21–24); hereafter ÍF 8.

² The accounts of the saga in Þormóður Torfason, *Historia rerum Norwegiae* (Copenhagen: Joachim Schmitgen, 1711), pp. 103–14, and Gerhard Schöning, *Norges riiges historie*, 3 vols (Copenhagen: H. Mumme and Faber, 1771–81), II, 466–74, end with the death of Ingimundr.

new evidence entitles him — as perhaps the foremost English scholar of Old Icelandic saga literature in nineteenth-century Britain.

Parts of this paper were first drafted in Leeds for inclusion in my Viking Society Presidential Address in 2002, and it is not difficult to establish a link between the dales of West Yorkshire, *Vatnsdæla saga*, and Sabine Baring-Gould. Wakefield became for several years his adopted home soon after returning from an expedition to Iceland in the summer of 1862.³ By this time he had almost certainly completed his pioneering English translation of *Vatnsdæla saga*.⁴ Within a year of arriving in Yorkshire he established a mission school and church among the rough-hewn industrial community at Horbury Brig. The fame of Baring-Gould's ministry soon spread, not through his *Vatnsdæla* translation, most of which remains unpublished, but through the memorable hymns he composed, such as 'Through the Night of Doubt and Sorrow', 'Now the Day is Over', and, most notably, 'Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War'. This latter work, known to this day as 'Áfram Kristmenn, Krossmenn' in Iceland, whence he had just returned at the time of its composition, was intended as a processional song for the local children as they climbed the steep hill to his new church. It seems a *formaldarsaga* giant's step from 'Onward Christian Soldiers' to *Vatnsdæla saga*, but the two texts were closely connected in Baring-Gould's mind. Indeed, his view of *Vatnsdæla* and *Vatnsdalur* can better be understood in the light of that famous hymn and of his other less well known early publications over the decade from 1854.

There are five relevant tales or texts worth examining briefly in this context. *The Chorister: A Tale of King's College Chapel in the Civil Wars* (1854), a short narrative, published in Cambridge, where Baring-Gould had been a scholar at Clare College, points the way. Though the setting is far from Iceland, that which was to become a favourite Baring-Gould Icelandic theme — the clash of old and new faiths — is already discernible in distilled form. William, a saintly choirboy at the college, is

³ On the life of Sabine Baring-Gould, see his *Early Reminiscences, 1834–64* (London: John Lane, 1923); Baring-Gould, *Further Reminiscences, 1864–94* (London: John Lane, 1925); also [anon], 'The Rev. S. Baring Gould at Home', *Sunday Magazine*, 24 (1895), 11–15. More recent studies include W. E. Purcell, *Onward Christian Soldier: A Life of Sabine Baring-Gould* (London: Longmans, 1957); Howard Kirk-Smith, *Now the Day is Over: The Life and Times of Sabine Baring-Gould* (Boston, Lincs.: Richard Key, 1997); Keith Lister, *Half my Life: The Story of Sabine Baring-Gould and Grace* (Wakefield: Charnwood, 2002).

⁴ Devon Record Office, Baring-Gould archive, 5203/M [hereafter DRO 5203/M], Box 25a: the *Vatnsdæla* translation can be found in four black octavo notebooks of the type used by Baring-Gould around 1860. Each has facing-page annotation. The first forty chapters are extant; we may assume that the final seven chapters were in a missing fifth notebook.

betrayed by a fellow scholar to Oliver Cromwell's agent Zedediah Pluckover, and eventually dies a martyr's death in the presence of mocking puritan soldiers, berserks in modern dress. This tale of Laudian beauty of holiness dramatizes the spirit of Baring-Gould's Anglo-Catholic values, which remained a fixed reference point throughout his life and ministry. The tale was still being reprinted twenty years after its first publication.⁵ A second story, 'The Rock of Thor (A.D. 981)' (1856),⁶ dramatizes the clash between paganism and Christianity before the official acceptance of the new faith in Iceland at the end of the millennium. Citing the second chapter of *Kristni saga* as its 'authority',⁷ Baring-Gould's first Iceland-based narrative is set at Giljá in Vatnsdalur, the location for the pioneering missionary activity undertaken by Þorvaldr Koðránsson and the Saxon bishop Friðrekr, both very much 'Christian soldiers marching as to war'. In *Kristni saga* we learn simply that Þorvaldr's elderly father, after a life spent worshipping the pagan gods, accepts the new faith at once after witnessing the Bishop's destruction of the local sacrificial stone. Baring-Gould adds a good deal of unsourced narrative contextualization: wild winter weather, Þorvaldr's homely mother anxiously awaiting her son's safe return, Koðrán's inability to burnish the Þórr's hammer design on his shield due to the god's disapproval of Þorvaldr's proselytizing activities, the colourful ritual of Koðrán's pagan sacrifices, the northern lights flashing as the new faith is proclaimed, and, eventually, the rock being consigned to the deep as Bishop Friðrekr solemnly chants the ninety-seventh psalm. In exploring the medieval story's variant versions, Baring-Gould is likely to have come across *Þorvalds þáttur viðförla I*, with its heavy freight of religious symbolism, and, perhaps for the first time, *Vatnsdæla saga*, with its greater emphasis on historicity and human agency.⁸ 'The Rock of Thor' represents Baring-Gould's characteristic fusion of the two narrative traditions.

The third conversion incident that attracted Baring-Gould's attention was paraphrased briefly in *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* (1863),⁹ immediately after his

⁵ Sabine Baring-Gould, *The Chorister, A Tale of King's College Chapel in the Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Meadows; London: J. T. Hayes, [1854]).

⁶ Sabine Baring-Gould, 'The Rock of Thor (A.D. 981)', *The Churchman's Companion*, 19 (1856), 285–94.

⁷ Baring-Gould owned and made frequent use of *Kristni-Saga*, ed. by P. F. Suhm [and others] (Copenhagen: A. H. Godiche, 1773).

⁸ Sian Duke, 'Kristni saga and its Sources: Some Revaluations', *Saga-Book*, 25.4 (2001), 345–66 (p. 364).

⁹ Sabine Baring-Gould, *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* (London: Smith, Elder and Son, 1863), p. 153.

translation of the Ingimundr death scene. Also mentioned briefly in the second chapter of *Kristni saga*, and narrated at greater length in *Vatnsdæla saga*,¹⁰ it tells of the halting progress towards the new faith of the aged Óláfr of Haukagil and his kinsman Þorkell *krafla* Þorgrímsson. Bishop Friðrekr consecrates three fires in Óláfr's hall, through which two fearsome berserks, each called Haukr, attempt to walk. These unwelcome guests are badly burnt, cudgelled to death, and cast into the ravine that now bears their name (Haukagil). Such evidence of divine intervention leads to the conversion of, first, Óláfr and, eventually, of the more reluctant Þorkell *krafla*. The fourth work in this 'clash of faiths' sequence of early Baring-Gould narratives enjoyed a particularly long shelf life. Eventually published as a fully-fledged novel, *The Iclander's Sword: or, The Story of Oraefadal* (1894), it was originally serialized as 'Öræfa Dal: An Icelandic Tale' in *The Hurst Johnian*, the school magazine of Hurstpierpoint College, a Woodard foundation school with a strong Christian tradition, where Baring-Gould taught from 1858 to 1864.¹¹ Baring-Gould had not travelled in Iceland when he wrote the tale, but his high church piety and septentrional inquisitiveness find expression within the fictional old north that his extensive engagement with Old Icelandic texts had already enabled him to create. The story is set at Skálholt Cathedral School, an establishment whose careful observance of traditional liturgy and ritual harmonized well with Baring-Gould's *Ecclesia Anglicana* instincts. We learn of Eric, a student of the school, torn between the Christian values of his education and the Viking-Age vengeance culture of his family. He struggles to resolve the conflict between love for Ingebjorg, daughter of the pious yeoman Gregorius, and loyalty to Gudruda, his impulsive pagan mother. She it was who had mistakenly interpreted Gregorius's possession of her late husband's ancestral sword (a creation of Völundr the smith) as evidence of murder, rather than (as was the case) of a chance find, after Gunnar had been killed by wolves. Thanks to the ministrations of a gifted physician within the Kirkjubær community, Eric survives the wounds inflicted during a fierce fight with Gregorius, learns the truth about the sword, and comes to realize that his future lies in communion with the Catholic church. The novel ends with a reminder — the eruption of Öræfujökull — of those forces that lie beyond all human and (perhaps) divine control.

¹⁰ ÍF 8, pp. 124–26.

¹¹ Sabine Baring-Gould, 'Öræfa-Dal: An Icelandic Tale', *The Hurst Johnian*, 1–2 (1859–60), 6–12, 36–44, 67–82, 111–20, 149–65, 189–99, 227–32, 270–80, 309–21, 350–63; 8–18, 52–59, 93–97, 138–53, 180–90, 227–37, 269–76.

Once again, Baring-Gould's fingerprints are all over the narrative: high church ritual, old northern lore and legend (the tale incorporates a Völundr ballad that Baring-Gould had composed in 1857),¹² and the need for a Christian soldier, however young, to march onwards against pre- and anti-Christian forces. And no sooner had one conversion narrative concluded in *The Hurst Johnian*, than another one, the last in our sequence of five, began. This was Baring-Gould's 'The Story of Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest, and his Horse Freyfaxi', a pioneering (and apparently still unknown)¹³ translation of *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*.¹⁴ It is not hard to fit the story of Hrafnkell into the conversion narrative template, insofar as the saga's eponymous hero flourishes in the second half of the saga, partly as a result of his having divested himself of all the paraphernalia of pagan worship which had previously limited his freedom of action:

'I believe it is all rubbish trusting to the gods'; and he vowed after this never to believe in them more, and he kept his word, too, never sacrificing again.¹⁵

Towards the end of the saga Hrafnkell has moved closer to the Baring-Gould ideal of the pre-Christian righteous pagan:

A change, however, had come over his disposition, and he was much more beloved than formerly, for though he had the same readiness to help others out of scrapes and was just as openhanded as before, he was now far more sociable and in all respects gentler.¹⁶

Small wonder, then, that Baring-Gould was attracted to *Vatnsdæla saga* as a whole, as an incident-rich chronicle of the emergence over several generations of a Christian community in Vatnsdalur, as righteous pagans gradually embraced the new faith, and as malevolent ones fiercely resisted it, devoting themselves instead to subverting the natural authority of Ingimundr *goði's* family. Attracted by its missionary spirit, Baring-Gould's decision to work on *Vatnsdæla saga* — not to mention his decision to visit Vatnsdalur — made him as much a pioneer in mid-nineteenth-century England as Ingimundr *goði* had been in ninth-century Iceland.

¹² 'Vélund the Forger' (1857) appears in *Original Songs*, an unpaginated folio manuscript volume in DRO 5203/M, Box 8.

¹³ It is not mentioned in Donald K. Fry, *Norse Sagas Translated into English* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), or in Paul Acker, 'Norse Sagas Translated into English: A Supplement', *Scandinavian Studies*, 65 (1993), 66–102.

¹⁴ Sabine-Baring-Gould, 'The Story of Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest and his Horse Freyfaxi', *The Hurst Johnian*, 5 (1862), 71–80, 95–103, 270–77.

¹⁵ 'The Story of Hrafnkell', p. 276.

¹⁶ 'The Story of Hrafnkell', p. 277.

He was, however, a linguistically well-prepared textual colonist. My recent examination of the two hundred and more books of Icelandic scholarship in Baring-Gould's private library (now located at Killerton House, a National Trust property near Exeter) has revealed the extent of those preparations. He had painstakingly learnt Icelandic from his well-thumbed copy of Franz Dietrich's *Altnordisches Lesebuch* (1843),¹⁷ a volume that provided a much more comprehensive range of learning resources (grammar, texts, glossary) than did any equivalent English volume. We should note that, unlike the helpless Mr Casaubon in *Middlemarch*, Baring-Gould had a good command of German, having spent several childhood *wanderjahren* in Mannheim, Marburg, Salzburg, Schandau, and Vienna in the company of his restless father. Baring-Gould's copy of the *Lesebuch*, dated 'Hurstpierpoint, Michaelmas, 1856', is heavily glossed — notably the first seven pages of the complete text of *Friðþjófs saga hins frækna*. The Dietrich *Lesebuch* is the sort of volume which he may have found out about from one of his carefully filed catalogues from the Leipzig bookseller Alphons Dürr, with whom he clearly dealt on a regular basis. Then, having learnt the Old Icelandic language thoroughly, Baring-Gould set to work on converting for special use his copy of Guðbrandur Vigfússon's 1860 edition of *Vatnsdæla saga* — as with all his copies of saga editions, he had the volume specially interleaved with blank pages for his extensive annotation.¹⁸ He also made discriminating use of E. C. Werlauff's impressive 1812 Copenhagen edition of the saga, with its learned introduction, annotation, and Danish translation.¹⁹

On every page of Baring-Gould's copy of the Guðbrandur Vigfússon edition there is evidence of how carefully he worked through the saga, with its colourful cast of witches, warlocks, and worse challenging Ingimundr and his descendants as they sought to establish a stable, civilized, and (eventually) Christian community in Vatnsdalur. The saga itself, in all likelihood a product of the vigorous literary culture in and around the Benedictine monastery in Þingeyrar, on the windswept headland at the northern entrance to Vatnsdalur,²⁰ represents a celebration of the individual and providential forces across the generations which

¹⁷ Franz Eduard Christian Dietrich, *Altnordisches Lesebuch* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843).

¹⁸ *Fornsögur*, ed. by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Theodore Möbius (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1860).

¹⁹ *Vatnsdæla saga ok saga af Finnboga hinum ramma*, ed. by E. C. Werlauff (Copenhagen: Schubart, 1812).

²⁰ Einar Ólafur Sveinsson (ÍF 8, pp. xiii–xiv, xxiii, lv) detects clerkly influence in subject and style, and assigns the work to the 'Þingeyjarskóli'.

helped to defeat Þórólfr *sleggja* and his weird and wild-eyed cats (ch. 28); Þórólfr *heljarskinn* and his sacrificial trenches (ch. 30); Gróa and her evil eye (ch. 36); and, not least, the witch Ljót whose off-stage sorceries in support of her wretched son Hrolleifr made life so fraught for Ingimundr and his sons. Such scenes had previously caught the eye of Thomas Bartholin (and his assistant Árni Magnússon), whose *Antiquitatum Danicarum* (1689)²¹ includes extensive quotations from and Latin translations of the saga's references to *niðstöng* (p. 105), burial customs (pp. 119, 290, 437–38), berserker fits (p. 345), and Finnish magic (pp. 466–70).

Having translated *Vatnsdæla* it was inevitable that visiting the saga sites and steads would become a major priority for Baring-Gould when organizing his 1862 Icelandic itinerary. By this time there was a steady stream of Britons making the still hazardous north Atlantic journey to Iceland in order to investigate its assorted natural features, whether scientific (vulcanology, ornithology), commercial (fish, sulphur for gun powder), sporting (mountaineering and fishing), or cultural (saga-steads, manuscript purchase).²² Baring-Gould's travels signalled a change on two fronts, however. To begin with, most foreign travellers found enough to occupy them in the south and west of Iceland, but Baring-Gould moved might and main to make his way to Þingeyjarsýsla. Moreover, the title of his book *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* seems a conscious challenge to the more familiar priorities signalled by Captain Charles Forbes's recently published *Iceland: Its Volcanoes, Geysers and Glaciers* (1860). Baring-Gould's letters home certainly reveal a competitive spirit in respect of other travellers: 'On Monday we start for the terrible Kaldidalur route, the dreaded pass which no Englishman since Henderson in 1813 has been through',²³ but also excitement at being able to explore the site of the berserker confrontation with the bishop at Haukagil, and the stronghold of Þórólfr *heljarskinn*, far up the valley, by Friðmundará. Just twenty-five years later Guðbrandur Vigfússon's brother Sigurður could find no trace of these ruins,²⁴ but in 1862 Baring-Gould's imagination was ready to supply whatever material

²¹ Thomas Bartholin, *Antiquitatum Danicarum de causis contemptæ a danis adhuc gentilibus mortis* (Copenhagen: Bockenhoffer, 1689). Page references in the text are to this edition.

²² Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Brewer, 2000), pp. 283–311; see also Gary Aho, "Með Ísland á heilanum": Íslandsbækur breskra ferðalanga 1772 til 1897', *Skírnir*, 167 (1993), 205–58.

²³ DRO 5203/M, Box 25a, Grímsunga, SB-G to his mother, 28 June [1862].

²⁴ Sigurður Vigfússon, [untitled], *Árbók Fornleifafélagsins* (1888–92), 119–23.

evidence was wanting. The same letter quoted above, from Grímsunga in Vatnsdalur, hints at his excitement:

I ride today up the river to see an old fort which in times of yore was erected by a man-sacrificer and which was stormed and taken by some of the chieftains of Vatnsdal.

By the time of his *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* account of the same location, he had, in every sense, fleshed out the detail:

In caves burrowed from the sand he sacrificed men, and this pure river, once rolling bits of hacked flesh into the Water-vale, told of horrid atrocities committed here [...] a thrall vanished from some near farm now and then, and for days the lone shepherd up the heithi heard shrieks which were echoed from crag to crag along these ravines.²⁵

Baring-Gould once noted that ‘the indefinite was my aversion’,²⁶ and we can see here what he meant. Yet those same ravines had also witnessed moments of saintliness, as acknowledged in his discussion of Þórir Ingimundarson in *The Book of Werewolves* (1865). Tormented in his youth by berserk fits, Þórir was eventually cured after caring for the orphan Þorkell *krafla*, a future Vatnsdalur *goði*, and the community’s first major Christian figure. Baring-Gould, ever the missionary, sees Þórir’s charity towards the destitute Þorkell as a reflection of ‘the craving in the heathen mind for a better and more merciful creed’.²⁷

It is in this same missionary context that Baring-Gould’s inclusion in *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas* of the Ingimundr *goði* death scene needs to be read: the righteous pagan martyred by the motiveless malignity of pagan forces. The background to the scene is soon stated. Among the youthful Ingimundr’s loyal band of Viking followers is Sæmundr the Hebridean. When King Haraldr *hárfaqr* seeks support at the Battle of Hafrsfjörðr, Ingimundr agrees to help but Sæmundr refuses. Anticipating the King’s displeasure, Ingimundr advises his companion to head for Iceland. After Ingimundr himself arrives and settles there, yielding to the call of destiny, he reluctantly assumes responsibility for Hrolleifr at Sæmundr’s request (ch. 20). Ingimundr’s obligations towards a couple so ‘difficult to have dealings with’ were daunting but unavoidable. The tension between the arrogant Hrolleifr and the sons of Ingimundr finds expression in the saga’s strident language: he is *beljarmaðr*, *fjándinn*, *manndjöfull*, *mannfjándi*, and *mestr mannhundur*.²⁸ Several

²⁵ Baring-Gould, *Iceland*, p. 135.

²⁶ Baring-Gould, *Early Reminiscences*, p. 314.

²⁷ *The Book of Werewolves* (London: Smith, Elder, 1865), p. 41.

²⁸ Terms clustered in ÍF 8, pp. 57–62 (ch. 22), for example.

of these terms are found only in *Vatnsdæla saga*,²⁹ as if to suggest that the saga-man had been overcome with neologistic indignation at the very mention of the fiendish Hrolleifr's name.

The actual hostilities are artfully sequenced: the squabble at the river concerning fishing rights; reports of Hrolleifr's defiance of Ingimundr's house-servants reach Hof; the explosive indignation of Jökull Ingimundarson; his father's caution and elder brother's filial obedience; and the controlling presence of Ljót, every bit as evil as her name suggests. The scene is then split, with stone throwing and arrow shooting at the river, and Ingimundr's arthritic progress to the river. In the confrontation scene between uncle and nephew the saga-man's deft use of free indirect speech creates the sense of multiple microphone locations and voices in the exchanges. Some of these effects survive in Baring-Gould's translation, as does the wordless cynicism of Hrolleifr's violent response to Ingrimundr's final appeal to his nephew's sense of obligation. I quote from the 1860 Guðbrandur Vigfússon text used by Baring-Gould, followed by his published translation of the scene:

Ingimundr mælti: búit hest minn, ok vil ek til ríða; hann var þá gamall ok nær blindr [...]. Sveinn var honum fenginn til fylgðar. Ingimundr var í blárri kápu. Sveinninn leiddi hestinn undir honum; ok er þeir kómu á árbakkann, þá sjá synir hans hann. [...] Ok er Hrolleifr sá hann, skaut hann til hans spjóti, ok kom á hann miðjan. Ok er hann fékk lagit, reið hann aprt at bakkanum ok mælti: þú sveinn, fylg mér heim. Hann hitti eigi sonu sína; ok er þeir kvómu heim, var mjök liðit á aptaninn. Ok er Ingimundr skyldi af baki fara, þá mælti hann: stirðr em ek nú, ok verðum vér lausir á fótum enir gömlu mennirnir. Ok er sveinninn tók við honum, þá þaut í sárinu. Sá sveinninn þá at spjótit stóð í gegnum hann. [...] Hann braut spjótið af skapti, ok gékk inn með fulltingi sveinsins, / ok settist í öndvegi sitt, ok bað hann eigi ljós gera, áðr synir hans kæmi heim. [...] Nú er þat at segja frá Ingimundar sonum, at þeir fóru heim um kveldit, ok ræddu með sér at Hrolleifr væri endemismaðr. Þorsteinn mælti: enn vitum vér eigi gerla hversu illt vér munum af honum hlotið hafa, ok segir mér eigi létt hugr um ferð föður várs. Þeir kvómu heim, ok gekk Þorsteinn í eldaskálann, ok stakk niðr hendinni, er hann hrataði, ok mælti: hví er vátt, húsfreyia? Hon svarar: 'þat ætla ek, at runnit muni hafa or klæðum Ingimundar bónda.' Þorsteinn svarar: þetta er hált sem blóð, ok kveykit ljós skjótt, ok svá var gert. Sat þá Ingimundr í öndvegi sínu ok var dauðr; stóð þar spjótit í gegnum hann. Jökull mælti: allillt er slíkt at vita um svá göfgan mann, at slíkt illmenni skal hafa honum at bana orðit, ok förum þegar ok drepum hann. Þorsteinn mælti: '[...] en við þat megum vér huggask, at mikill manna munr er vorðinn með þeim Hrolleifi, ok njóta mun faðir minn þess frá þeim er sólina hefir skapt ok allan heiminn, hverr sem sá er.'³⁰

²⁹ Evidence derived from *Íslendinga sögur: Orðstöðulykill og texti* (Reykjavík: Mál og menning, 1996).

³⁰ *Vatnsdæla saga*, in *Forn sögur*, ed. by Guðbrandur Vigfússon and Möbius, pp. 37–38.

(The old man called out, 'Saddle my horse! I must ride to the river.' He was old and nearly blind [...]. He had got a little country lad for his guide, and the boy led the horse. They came to the river bank, and the white-haired chief was dressed in an ample blue cloak. [...])

Now directly Hrolleifr saw him, he flung his spear, and struck him in the middle. It was dusk, so that neither his sons nor the boy noticed the blow; but, directly he received it, Ingimund snapped the haft, folded his blue mantle round him, and rode up the bank.

'My little lad,' said he, 'lead me home.'

So the boy guided him back, and the evening had quite closed in when they arrived. As Ingimund tried to get off his horse, he said, 'I am getting rather stiff; you see we old folk are rather shaky.'

Then it was, as the lad helped him down, that the boy saw the spear thrust through him. [...] Then leaning on the boy, he went into the hall, sat himself down in the seat of honour, and bade the servants not light the fire or kindle a lamp before the return of his sons. [...]

Now I must tell you that Ingimund's sons came home in the gloaming, and talked thus to each other on their way —

'The like of Hrolleifr is not to be found far and near!' And Thorstein added: 'My mind sadly misgives me about my father's ride to the river. There is no knowing what mischief that Hrolleifr might do!'

They came in; Thorstein walked to the end of the hall, and whilst feeling along the ground with his hands, he asked, 'How comes there any wet here?'

The housewife answered that it ran in all probability from the old man's clothes; but Thorstein said, 'It is gluey, like blood! Quick! kindle a light!'

When this was done, they found Ingimund enthroned in his high seat, dead, and the spear thrust through him.

Jökull was like a madman. Thorstein could hardly restrain him from rushing off to revenge himself on the murderer. [...] Truly there is a great disparity between our father and his murderer, and this will avail him before Him who created the sun and all the heavens, and who assuredly is Great, whoever He may be.'³¹

As presented here Ingimundr is a martyr worthy of inclusion in one of Baring-Gould's many *Lives of the Saints* volumes.³² The *goði*'s exemplary dignity, strength of will, and eventual low cunning in the discharge of obligations to his sworn-brother's relative are given substance and shape by a cluster of familiar narrative moods and motifs — dusk and darkness, a laconic joke, the servant boy's loyalty, the implausible explanation of the damp patch on the floor, and the eventual *coup de théâtre* moment when the candles are kindled, to reveal a kind of old northern El Cid figure, dignified in death, as he had been a *goður drengur* in life.

³¹ Baring-Gould, *Iceland*, p. 142.

³² *Lives of the Saints*, ed. by Sabine Baring-Gould, 16 vols (Edinburgh: John Grant, 1914).

The inclusion of an extended and carefully translated extract from a saga had never previously been attempted in any Iceland travel book published in Britain. The sometimes paraphrastic style adopted by Baring-Gould was a strategic choice. Before setting sail, he had written anxiously to his mother about the financial importance of producing ‘the book of the trip’:

My chances of making a book are rather diminished as I find that Dr Dasent, the well-known Icelandic scholar, was out there last year and is going again this year, and is at work on a volume of his travels.³³

In the event, he need not have worried about Dasent’s travelogue, which never appeared, but Baring-Gould had an enterprising alternative plan:

If no publisher will take my travels I shall get one to take a series of tales from the sagas, not servile translations, but worked up with descriptions of the scenery and locale, and with sketches.

Among the decidedly non-‘servile’ elements in the published version we may note the amplification of *sveinn* into ‘a little country lad’; the attempt to create causality between the onset of dusk and the initial failure to notice Ingimundr’s wound; the old man’s unscripted concealment of his injury, through judicious use of his blue cloak, and by his snapping off of the spear-shaft before rather than after the return journey; the revoicing of the sons’ collective indirect speech indignation at Hrolleifr as Jökull’s direct speech; and the narratorial highlighting of Jökull’s transformation from articulate son into inarticulate ‘madman’.

Baring-Gould’s unpublished version of the same scene, prepared as part of his translation of the whole saga, is intriguingly different:

He called out, ‘Busk me my horse, I must ride there’. [...] He had got a little country lad for his guide, he was dressed in a blue cape, and the boy led the horse; and when they came to the river bank, there they saw him. Now when Hrolleif saw him he flung at him his spear which struck him in the middle, and, when he received the blow, he rode back up the bank and said, ‘My lad, lead me home’, so the boy guided him home, but the sons did not observe what had been done; when they came home, the evening had closed in, and when Ingimund tried to get off his horse, he said, ‘I am rather stiff, for we old people are shakey’. When the lad began to help him down, he saw the spear thrust through him. [...] Then he broke the spear head from the shaft, and went in supported by the lad, and sat him down in his high seat, bade them kindle no light before his sons came home. [...]

Now we must tell how the sons of Ingimund came home at dusk, and talked amongst one another of Hrolleif, how the like of him was not to be found, and ‘that we do not know what mischief he may have done, and my mind misgives me about our father’s

³³ DRO 5203/M, Box 25a, Hurstpierpoint, SB-G to his mother, 23 May [1862].

journey', said Thorstein. They came home and Thorstein went into the end of the hall and whilst feeling along the ground with his hands, he asked how came there any wet there? The housewife answered that it was probably the drip from Ingimund's wet clothes. Thorstein said, 'It is gluey like blood, quick, kindle a light'. When this was done they found Ingimund seated in his high seat — dead and the spear was run through him. Jökull cried out: 'Most ill that news, that such an exemplary man should have met his death thus at the hands of such a miscreant, let us off after him and kill him.' Thorstein said, '[...] it is worth considering how great a difference there is between our father and Hrolleif, and this will avail him before Him who created the sun and all Heaven, Whoever He may be, though one may know that He must have made you.'³⁴

The gloss of the published version is reduced here to a matt finish: 'gloaming' is now simply 'dusk', 'enthroned' becomes 'seated', 'disparity' is simplified to 'difference', and 'in all probability' to 'probably'. The colloquialized and contextualized 'Saddle my horse! I must ride to the river' finds more literal (and archaistic) expression in the manuscript as 'Busk me my horse, I must ride there'. There is, moreover, no attempt to explain plot action in terms of textually unauthorized references to night drawing 'nigh'; the translator is here less anxious to create subordinate structures out of coordinate ones; and the published version's reordering of elements within speeches is not attempted. The unpublished version retains the edited text's emphasis on Þorsteinn's unity with his siblings, notably in his anxiety about 'our father's journey' rather than the more self-preoccupied 'my father's ride to the river' of the published version. Both versions introduce considerable variation when rendering the saga's ubiquitous tag verb *mælti*, though, and, for all the punctilious capitalization of the pronominal elements, we may note that the manuscript version struggles to make sense of Þorsteinn's final reference to the supreme being.

Such stumbles are few and far between, however. There were very few nineteenth-century British Icelandicists with the linguistic command to cope successfully with this scene. Moreover, unlike George Dasent, Sir Edmund Head, and (later) William Morris, Baring-Gould appears to have worked on this translation — and some twenty other unpublished translations in the Devon Record Office³⁵ — entirely without the assistance of learned Icelanders. Though there is

³⁴ DRO 5203/M, Box 25a.

³⁵ The sagas translated are *Egils saga Skallagrímssonar*, *Færeyinga saga*, *Gull-Þóris saga*, *Harðar saga*, *Hervarar saga*, *Hrafnkels saga Freysgoða*, *Kormáks saga*, *Laxdæla saga*, *Ljósvetninga saga*, *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar*, *Reykðæla saga*, *Svarfdæla saga*, *Vatnsdæla saga*, *Valla-Ljóts saga*, *Víga-Glúms saga*, *Þorsteins þátrr Þejarmagns*, *Hrómundar þátrr halta*, *Orms þátrr Storrólfssonar*, and *Þorsteins þátrr skelks*.

evidence of his having been in contact with Jón Sigurðsson in Copenhagen,³⁶ I have found no indication of the Anglophile Iclander having provided any assistance with the translations.

The same absence of help was less true of Baring-Gould's exploration of Vatnsdalur itself. While Finnish prophetesses and manifest destiny had taken care of Ingimundr's travel arrangements, Baring-Gould came to rely on a more visible agency — Sveinn Skúlason (1824–88), a *neftóbaksfræðingur* in his own right, eventually a priest like Baring-Gould, and a local with a family interest in the neighbouring valleys of Vatnsdalur and Viðidalur and in the two sagas which tell of their settlement, for Sveinn's father had been sheriff of that area. Having studied at the university and worked as a civil servant in Copenhagen, Sveinn himself returned to Akureyri in 1856, where he founded and edited the regional journal *Norðri*, ran the local printing press, served as *alþingismaður* from 1859 to 1867, and, before moving to Reykjavík at the end of 1862, acted as guide and general factotum for visiting scholar-travellers.³⁷ Not long before Baring-Gould's arrival, for instance, Sveinn had accompanied the great German scholar Konrad Maurer during his visit to the area, arranging for books and manuscripts to be available for inspection at local farms.³⁸ Though the red carpet was not rolled out quite so far for Baring-Gould, he was able to spend time with Sveinn in Akureyri, where he examined several saga manuscripts³⁹ and newly published volumes of ballads and *rímur*, with many of whose European analogues he was already familiar.

In *Norðri* and elsewhere, Sveinn banged the drum robustly for the Vatnsdalur region and its culture. Indeed in 1858 he published an inexpensive octavo reprint of the text in E. C. Werlauff's 1812 *Vatnsdæla* edition — it was among the first nineteenth-century pocket-sized editions of *any* individual saga published in

³⁶ Baring-Gould was interested in *Bærings saga*, as evidence of his family's Icelandic ancestry (DRO 5203/M, Box 25a); and an Englishman matching Baring-Gould's description made contact with Jón Sigurðsson about the saga: *Fornsögur suðurlanda*, ed. by Gustaf Cederschiöld (Lund: Berling, 1884), p. cxcii.

³⁷ See Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkrar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, 6 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenzka bókmenntafélag, 1948–76), IV, 375.

³⁸ *Konrad Maurer: Íslandsferð, 1858*, trans. by Baldur Hafstað (Reykjavík: Ferðafélag Íslands, 1997), pp. 143–46, 184, 189, 197.

³⁹ London, British Library, Additional MSS 24972 and 24973 were acquired by Baring-Gould in Akureyri. Appropriately, the former manuscript, written during the eighteenth century, includes a text of *Vatnsdæla saga*.

Iceland.⁴⁰ In his preface, Sveinn plausibly claims that now the poorest farmer could own a printed copy of *Vatnsdæla* and underlines the romantic regionalism and nationalism energizing his labours. He aligns himself with the spirit of the Fjölismenn — notably of Jónas Hallgrímsson's already famous (or notorious) poem 'Ísland' (1835). Sveinn claims that there is nothing which can better sustain his fellow-countrymen as they fight 'að ná þjóðrjettindum og frelsi' ('to gain self-government and freedom') than to think about their ancestors 'meðan landið var skipað frjálsum höfðingjum af konunga, jarla og hersa kyni' ('when the land was peopled by free chieftains descended from kings, jarls, and chieftains').⁴¹ In his poem Jónas had been thinking of 'Gunnar og Hjeðinn og Njáll';⁴² Sveinn Skúlason was clearly thinking of Ingimundr *goði*.

That seems to have been the public agenda of Sabine Baring-Gould's Akureyri-based adviser. Einar Ólafur Sveinsson called *Vatnsdæla saga* 'höfðingja skuggsjá'⁴³ ('a mirror for chieftains'), and though the reference is to the work's medieval cultural politics, it is not difficult to identify something of the modern *Vatnsdals-goði* in Sveinn Skúlason, including a capacity for sensing parallels between himself and the mighty Vatnsdalers of old. If Sveinn's politicized regionalism found expression during his meeting with Baring-Gould, it is likely to have found a sympathetic reception, for Baring-Gould's own response to *Vatnsdæla saga*, and to all the other sagas he translated, is also marked by his own sense of localism. In his annotation we find a consistent tendency towards cultural appropriation, as he draws attention to links, real or imagined, between the language of the saga and the dialect and folk culture of North Devon, where he was born, and to which he returned in 1875 as the parish priest of Lew Trenchard on the north edge of Dartmoor. Three instances make the point. In Chapter 5 of the saga Þorsteinn Ketilsson, having killed the mysterious forest-dweller Jökull, fulfils his pledge to report this deed to his victim's father, Ingimundr jarl. Þorsteinn's integrity wins him the parents' respect, and they accept his support until the end of their lives. At this point in the saga the narrator notes simply that 'Jarl kvað líklega slíkt mælt'

⁴⁰ *Vatnsdæla saga* (Akureyri: [n.pub.], 1858). See also Sveinn's peppery response (*Norðri*, 5–7 (1857–59), 132) to Guðbrandur Vigfússon's cool review of the publication, in *Ný félagsrit* (1859), 131–33.

⁴¹ *Vatnsdæla saga* (1858), unpaginated Preface.

⁴² *Ritverk Jónasar Hallgrímssonar*, ed. by Haukur Hannesson, Páll Valsson, and Sveinn Yngvi Egilsson, 4 vols (Reykjavík: Svart á hvítu, 1989), I, 63.

⁴³ ÍF 8, p. xxxii.

(‘The jarl said that this was fittingly spoken’).⁴⁴ Baring-Gould’s annotation reads: ‘equiv. to Devonshire *likely* = suitable’.⁴⁵ In Chapter 21, at the point where Ingimundr settled Hrolleifr and Ljót on a farm at Áss,⁴⁶ Baring-Gould notes: ‘*ás*, lit[erally] a beam, hence a hill ridge or spur of a mountain. The Devonshire word *beam* for a hill ridge is similar, [as in] Holcombe beam, unless it be a corruption of Beacon’. And, lastly, in Chapter 28, the evil wizard Þórólfr is chased into the marshes adjoining Vatnsdalsá: ‘Þórólfr kom þar at, ok váru þar augu djúp eðr fen’ (‘Þórólfr came to a place where there was a deep hole or marshy area’).⁴⁷ Baring-Gould notes: ‘*auga*, lit. ‘eye’ — perhaps the bog is so called because it is a little green patch in the midst of grey swampy land. The bog holes in Dartmoor are always to be distinguished thus’. And so they were, as Dr Watson was to learn from Mr Stapleton in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, the work of Baring-Gould’s close friend Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, a frequent guest at Lew Trenchard. In the Sherlock Holmes tale, the moor is a fearsome place of primitivism and death,⁴⁸ but for Baring-Gould it was a magic site of lore and legend, presided over by the illiterate ‘Moor Men’, whose rich oral traditions (increasingly threatened by extinction) he so admired.⁴⁹ We might say, in summary, that such annotation points to a Victorian scholar whose response to the old north was far removed from the jingoism of George Webbe Dasent and other contemporaries.⁵⁰ Baring-Gould sought to promote not so much the nation of England, but rather the Kingdom of Heaven and the county of Devon.

Though Baring-Gould lived long enough to have known about the second principal *Vatnsdæla* vision and version to be discussed in this paper, and though he would assuredly have approved of its regionalism and accessibility, there is no reason to suppose that he ever read or heard it. The author, Halldór Briem, was

⁴⁴ ÍF 8, p. 16.

⁴⁵ All references to Baring-Gould’s *Vatnsdæla* annotation derive from DRO 5203/M, Box 25a.

⁴⁶ ÍF 8, pp. 56–57.

⁴⁷ ÍF 8, p. 75.

⁴⁸ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, ed. by Francis O’Gorman (Plymouth: Broadview, 2006), pp. 23–26.

⁴⁹ See, for example, his remarks in [anon.], ‘The Rev. S. Baring Gould at Home’, p. 603; also his frequent references to ‘Moor-man’ sources in his manuscript book of West Country ballads: DRO 5203/M, Box 17.

⁵⁰ George Webbe Dasent, ‘The Norsemen in Iceland’, *Oxford Essays* (1858), 165–214; see also Wawn, *Vikings and Victorians*, pp. 142–82.

born into a powerful late nineteenth-century north Icelandic family.⁵¹ Having made the hopeful emigrant's journey to Manitoba in Nýja Ísland in the 1870s, he made a more disillusioned journey home not long after. He subsequently taught at Möðruvallaskóli from 1882 to 1908, during which time his publications included a school text-book on Icelandic history and, perhaps encouraged by the English wife he met and married in Canada, an Icelandic translation of some Robin Hood tales.⁵² His more significant contribution to late nineteenth-century Icelandic medievalism was *Ingimundur gamli*, a solemn and statuesque three-act drama based on the first twenty-six chapters of *Vatnsdæla saga*. The play was first performed in March 1903 in the Clausen warehouse at Stykkishólmur, on the northern Snæfellsnes peninsula, then something of a centre for saga-based drama in Iceland.⁵³ We can consider the nature of Halldór's response to the saga by examining his version of the Ingimundr death scene, which may have prompted its original audience, and can still prompt us, to reflect on one key issue in the saga — the motivation of Hrolleifr and Ljót in their unyielding hostility towards Ingimundr. The saga tells us what happened; the play encourages us to wonder why. Was Hrolleifr beyond redemption? Was his function solely to enable Ingimundr to die a martyr's death? Why was Ingimundr so stubbornly loyal to him? In his exploration of the saga's subtext Halldór produces a kind of interpretative essay on the saga.

To deal first with the role of Hrolleifr in the play. Halldór Briem's villain is no unbending Iago, 'determined to prove a villain'. Early in the play we find him in the textually unauthorized but dramatically intriguing grip of unrequited love for Jórunn Ingimundardóttir: "jég ann þér svo mjög. Það vildi jeg að jeg gæti með einhverju móti ánnið mér ást þína" ("I love you so much. I wish that I could somehow win your love").⁵⁴ His behaviour, a bizarre blend of lovelorn prostration and the cynical spirit of Richard III — 'was ever woman in this humour

⁵¹ See Páll Eggert Ólason, *Íslenzkrar æviskrár*, II, 246.

⁵² Halldór Briem, *Ágrip af Íslandssögu* (Reykjavík: Fjølagsprentsmiðjan, 1903); Briem, *Hrói höttur: ensk þjóðsaga* (Reykjavík: Ólafur S. Thorgeirsson, 1900).

⁵³ Halldór's play on the life of Ingólfur Árnason was never published: see Sveinn Einarsson, *Íslensk leiklist II* (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1996), pp. 240, 301; also Ásgeir Ásgeirsson, *Saga Stykkishólms*, 2 vols (Stykkishólmur: Stykkishólmsbær, 1992–97), II, 422–23; Júlíana Jónsdóttir, *Víg Kjartans Ólafssonar*, ed. by Helga Kress (Hafnafjörður: Söguspekingastifti, 2001), pp. 14–16.

⁵⁴ Halldór Briem, *Ingimundur gamli* (Reykjavík: Sigurður Kristjánsson, 1901), p. 6. Further page references are to this edition.

woo'd | Was ever woman in this humour won' — attracts the disapproval of his mother. She mocks his momentarily principled refusal to undertake some *níðingsverk* to avenge a recent sporting humiliation at the hands of Jökull: 'ætli orsökinn sje þá ekki fremur sú að þú þórir ekki framar til við hann? Ertu þá þessi mannskræfa?' (p. 9) ('Maybe the reason is rather that you do not dare to confront him further. Is this the sort of coward you now are?'). Thus, for a time, Hrolleifr is torn between the two women in his life; in his improbable love affair he clambers some way up the slippery pole of human redemption before slithering back down.

As for Ingimundr's unswerving loyalty to Hrolleifr, here is a relationship on the outer margins of *félagskapur* and *fóstbræðralag* obligations. In Halldór's play the patriarch's family are clearly puzzled, and his wife challenges him directly:

Vigdís: En þegar Sæmundur gat ekki haft þau fyrir spell og spill-virki í Skagafirði, hvernig getum vjer þá verið skyldug til að búa við slíkt?

Ingimundur: Hjer er ekki um það að ræða, hvað vjer erum skyldug til, heldur hvað vjer / viljum gjöra í greiðaskyni og fyrir vináttusakir, ef þau mægðin kynnu að geta bætt ráð sitt. (pp. 10–11)

(*Vigdís*: But when Sæmundar couldn't put up with them in Skagaförður because of their mischief and mayhem, how can we then be under any obligation to live with such people?)

Ingimundur: This has nothing to do with obligation, but rather with what we are prepared to do out of favour and friendship, if mother and son can improve their behaviour.)

Such nobility of sentiment does little to stop the 'hatreds and behindbacks' grumbling. In a further major change from the saga Halldór Briem has Vigdís announce news of Sæmundr's death, only to be greeted by Ingimundr's declaration that he must now be twice as loyal, as Hrolleifr's only surviving relative. An air of self-sacrificial saintliness colours the scene:

Vigdís (gröm): En hví þurfa þau þá að vera þessar ókindur, svo að allir hafa andstyggð á þeim?

Ingimundur: Ef þau geta ekki að þessu gjört, mega þá ekki hinir telja sig sælli, sem ekki hafa slíkt við að berjast? (p. 32)

(*Vigdís (indignant)*: But why do they have to be such monsters, so that no one can stand them?)

Ingimundur: If they can't help themselves in this, may not others consider themselves even luckier, who don't have to deal with such matters?)

Ingimundr is thus determined to devote the last of his physical strength, mental ingenuity, and human dignity to protecting Hrolleifr and Ljót. Accordingly, when the fishing dispute develops, the old man sets off for the river, leaving Vigdís alone with her feelings of indignation, incomprehension — and respect:

Vigdís (ein): En sú góðgirnd, sem aldrei þreytist. (*litur út*). Þarna fer hann af stað. Hann vill forða öðrum fyrir slysum, jeg vildi óska að hann yrði þá ekki sjálfur fyrir neinu slysinu. (p. 33)

(*Vigdís (alone)*: That benevolence which never tires. (*She looks out*). There he goes. He wants to save others from harm; my own wish is that he does not suffer any harm himself.)

The play moves inexorably towards Ingimundr's death. A shepherd reports how events have unfolded at the river, and soon after this the stage directions announce that 'Litlu síðar koma Ingimundur og Gunnar [the servant boy] inn; Ingimundur er fögur sem nár og styður sig við Gunnar' (p. 36) ('A little later Ingimundur and Gunnar enter; Ingimundur is pale as a corpse, and supports himself on Gunnar'). At this point, to put it mildly, Halldór Briem's play cannot match the tautness of the equivalent scene in the saga, in spite of the number of direct quotations included. The verbal infelicities queue up for their moment in the spotlight, as the brothers arrive home:

Jökull: Þá heyrum vjer, hvað föður vorum hefur talast til við Hrolleif.
Þorsteinn (finnur vætu á gólfinu): Hví er hjer vott og hált sem blóð.
Jökull, Þórir, Högni (svipast um á gólfinu, allir í einu): Blóð er það.
Þorsteinn: Hví er öndvegið tjaldi hulið? (*dregur tjaldið frá, Ingimundur situr í öndvegini og er andaður, spjót stendur í gegnum hann*). Hjer er faðir vor lagður spjóti (*dregur spjótið út, litur á og hinir með*). Spjót Hrolleifs. Með spjótið í sárinu hefur faðir vor riðið heim.
Jökull (með innibyrðum ákafa): Nú skal Hrolleifur eigi lengi lifa.
Þórir: Förum nú þegar að honum.
Högni (um leið): Og best að þau mæðgin fari eina för bæði. (p. 39)

(*Jökull*: Let's hear what our father has said to Hrolleifr.
Þorsteinn (feels wetness on the floor): Why is it wet here and slippery as blood?
Jökull, Þorsteinn, Högni (all examine the floor at once): It is indeed blood.
Þorsteinn: Why is the high-seat curtain drawn? (*He pulls the curtain. Ingimundur is sitting on the high-seat and is dead, pierced through with a spear*). Here is our father, pierced by a spear. (*He pulls out the spear, examines it, as do the others*). Hrolleifr's spear. Our father has ridden home with the spear in his wound.
Jökull (with pent-up fury): Hrolleifur will not live long now.
Þorsteinn: Let's go and get him at once.
Högni (at the same time): And it would be best for mother and son to share the same fate.)

Yet the penny plain writing can perhaps be excused, for the scene includes a striking moment when the tutelary spirit (the *gyðja*) of Vatnsdalur reappears. The 'Forleikur' ('Prologue') of *Ingimundur gamli* had found her on a lonely hillside, brightly lit, and clad all in white. Her celebration of the valley and folk over which she has presided is clouded by her vision of the future chaos to be caused by 'hinn illi | ófögnuður, | mægðin tvö | í myrkum huga' (p. 2) ('the evil joylessness, mother

and son, dark of thought'). In the Ingimundr death scene, melancholy-sounding horns blare bleakly over the valley, growing ever louder, as the *gyðja* appears in a dazzling light, but now with a dark cloak over her shoulders. Her message matches the mood music:

Fram er það komið er fyrir eg sá, að seiðmögnum illska sigri hrósar. Harma máttu, dalur, höfðingja frægan er niðingshendi nár er hniginn.	That has come to pass which I fore-saw, that spell-worked evil triumphs. Well may you lament, valley, the famous leader, who by villain's hand is laid low.
Gráta máttu mæring dýran, er nú hlaut gjalda göfuglyndis. Vafrar ódrengur völtum fótum, er velgjörðamann sinn vegið hefur[.]	Well may you cry for a dear nobleman, who has just received his reward for his generous spirit. A wretch hovers near with trembling feet, who his benefactor has slain.
Gleðstu þó því göfugmenni svifinn er burt til sælli heima. En síðar mun, þó seinna verði á illþýði bitna eigið verk. (p. 38)	Yet, be of good cheer, because the good man has moved on to a better world. And, later, though it may take time, on the villain will be visited his own work.

The nature of the vengeance becomes a source of family dispute, marked by a degree of female deference that, not for the first time in the play, may have raised the eyebrows of any 'new women' in the Snæfellsnes audience:

Vigdís: Eptir norrænum lögum er sá einn sekur, er verkið vinnur, en ekki sá, er hvetur.
Þórdís: Jeg skil nú aldrei þau lög. Því kynlegt er, ef sá, sem upptökin á og öllu veldur, er með öllu saklaus.
Vigdís: Það mun vart meðfæri vor kvenna að dæma um slíkt. Ekki mun og annað hlíta en að fara að lögum. (p. 44)

(*Vigdís*: According to Norwegian law is he alone guilty who does the deed, and not he who incites it.

Þorsteinn: I never understand those laws. It is absurd that the one who starts and is the cause of all the trouble is completely innocent.

Vigdís: It is hardly for us women to judge such matters. The only thing to do is abide by the law.)

It remains for Hrolleifur to make a last ludicrous bid for the hand of Jórunn, for Ljót to make a last loathsome sacrifice to Þorgerður Hölgabrúður (making an unexpected guest appearance in the play), and for the brothers, having agreed that the law allows Ljót to be punished as a co-conspirator, to avenge their father. Þorsteinn offers a suitably talismanic conclusion:

Allt er gott, þegar endirinn er góður, segir hið fornkveðna [. . .]. Nú munum vjer halda áfram verki hans, og reyna eptir megni að efla veg og frama byggðar vorrar. Mun það þá sannast, að Vatnsdalur mun verða einhver hin farsælasta byggð á landi hjer. (p. 61)

(All's well that ends well, says the old adage [. . .] we must now continue his [Ingimundur's] work, and do our best to enhance the honour and prominence of our region. May it prove to be the case that Vatnsdalur will be the most blessed region here in Iceland.)

This is the cue for Vatnsdalur's tutelary spirit to appear for the last time. Her message merges with those of Halldór Briem and Sveinn Skúlason and the Fjölnismenn, as valley, region, and nation are celebrated anew:

Nú er þjer fullnægt, fagri dalur, nú hefur illþýði iðgjöld hlotið. Nú ertu fold af fári hreinsuð, ok dökkur af sólu sorti horfinn.	Now there is joy for you, fair Vatnsdalur; now evil has received its reward. Now, fair region, you are cleansed of pestilence, and darkness from the sun has disappeared.
Fagna þú, dalur, fríðum sigri, fagna því auðna að þjer hlúir. Hrósa þú happi, að hönd ein voldug hlífiskildi þjer heldur yfir. /	Rejoice, Vatnsdalur, in the great victory; rejoice in the fate that enfolds you. Praise the good fortune that a mighty hand a protective shield holds over you.
Lát nú æ dug og dáð þjer ráða, hreysti og drengskap hjerað byggja. Muntu þá blómgast, blíði dalur, og ekkert fá grandað gæfu þinni. (pp. 62–63)	May now valour and renown always rule you, may bravery and honour build up the region. Then will you flourish, blessed valley, and nothing will be able to destroy your good fortune.

As we have noted, Halldór Briem's play may have encouraged those familiar with the saga to reflect on the relative force of friendship and fellowship, region

and nation. Briem's regional roots, like those of Sveinn Skúlason, lay deep in Húnavatnasýsla and Þingeyjarsýsla, and *Ingimundr gamli* is a work that seeks to make local sense of the saga. The work of the final *Vatnsdæla* reader and *neftóbaksfræðingur* in this paper also invites us to consider the role of local Vatnsdalur sources — putative medieval ones — in the creation of the saga. In particular it explores the kind of ideological charge that oral and written traditions about Ingimundr and Hrolleifr might have carried when they first reached Þingeyrar, and how they might have been reconfigured within a monastic environment. In 1962 Dr Benjamín Eiríksson visited Vatnsdalur, and shortly afterwards published a pamphlet about the saga.⁵⁵ It tells a remarkable tale and conceals an even more harrowing one. Dr Benjamín's theory of the death of Ingimundr is a mould-breaking one. He proposes the following sequence: in the confrontation at the river Ingimundr was killed accidentally by Jökull, his hot-headed son; the family at Hof persecuted Hrolleifr and his mother because they were practising Christians, whose religious ceremonies were interpreted as black magic; a cover-up story was invented to defend family honour, according to which Hrolleifr is cast in the role of killer, and he and Ljót are demonized as *galdráfólk*; this cover-up story was soon committed to rune sticks, which eventually reached Þingeyrar; the story was eventually written up with an overtly Christian colouring, through which Ingimundr is presented as a righteous pagan, and his descendants as pioneering Christians. No one in Þingeyrar realized that the real Christian heroes of the saga were Hrolleifr and Ljót.

This is *neftóbaksfræði* on a grand scale. But alongside the story that Benjamín Eiríksson told in 1964 was another that he did not tell, but which has been told on his behalf more recently.⁵⁶ In the late 1930s, while studying in Moscow, the Iclander married a young woman of mixed German and Russian parentage, and they had a baby daughter. One night the KGB arrived at the couple's Moscow home and arrested Benjamín Eiríksson's wife in the presence of the future Nobel Prize-winning novelist Halldór Kiljan Laxness (Benjamín was in Stockholm): mother and daughter were never seen again. Benjamín's post-war career took him first to Harvard University, and eventually back to Iceland, where he became Governor of the Bank of Iceland. In the early 1960s, he suffered a serious breakdown, retired from his official duties, and grew increasingly eccentric in

⁵⁵ Benjamín Eiríksson, *Um Vatnsdælusögu* (Reykjavík: Helgafell, 1964).

⁵⁶ Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson, *Benjamín H. J. Eiríksson í stormum sinna tíða* (Reykjavík: Bókafélagið, 1996); also Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson, *Kiljan: 1932–1948: ævisaga Halldórs Kiljans Laxness* (Reykjavík: Bókafélagið, 2004), pp. 219, 238–40, 280.

appearance and fervent in his evangelical Christianity. It was during this period of psychological turmoil that he visited Vatnsdalur and wrote his essay on *Vatnsdæla saga*, and it is not difficult to read something of the author's traumas, past and present, in the fraught tale he tells of Christian persecution, conspiracy, and cover-up. His theory, moreover, was no passing whimsy: its essence is repeated in a 1995 ghost-written autobiographical volume.⁵⁷

Benjamín Eiríksson's theory certainly confirms the capacity of Vatnsdalur and its history to generate new narratives. Yet such surreal speculation invites — and has met with — considerable scepticism. It remains rather more likely that a saganman, whether learned or lay, could have created the saga's various witches and wizards out of pre-existing oral or literary sources, and then deployed them in the saga to function as convenient representations of unreconstructed evil against which the pre-Christian and Christian virtues of Ingimundr's dynasty could be defined. And yet Benjamin Eiríksson's *Vatnsdæla saga* theories have attracted at least one powerful scholarly advocate. In a recent study of the worship of pagan gods in Iceland, Professor Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson has argued that Benjamin's theory offers 'betri og skynsamlegri skýringu á umræddum frásögnum *Vatnsdæla sögu* en nokkur önnur skýringartilraun'⁵⁸ ('a better and more sensible explanation of the debated narratives of *Vatnsdæla saga* than any other'). Though steering clear of the putative rune-sticks and of Jökull's accidental murder of Ingimundr, Jón Hnefill cites with approval Benjamin's evidence for Hrolleifr having been a Christian: the Hebridean background, the textual reference to 'þeirra sið'⁵⁹ (thereby appearing to distinguish the religious practices of Ljót and Hrolleifr from those of most Icelanders at the time), the alterity represented by their *blóthús* (as opposed to a *hof*), and (even) the possibility that Hrolleifr could have been a priest whose *blótklæði* was simply the red vestment in which he said Mass.⁶⁰ Jón Hnefill notes that by 930 Þorsteinn Ingimundarson had become among the most influential chieftains in Iceland, dedicated to the promotion of the heathen religion.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Hannes Hólmsteinn Gissurarson, *Benjamín H. J. Eiríksson*, pp. 335–36; see also pp. 350–52.

⁵⁸ Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Blót í norrænum sið: Rýnt í forn trúarbrögð með þjóðfræðilegri* (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, Félagsvísindastofnun, 1997), pp. 94–103 (p. 101); see also his 'Trúarsagnir í Vatnsdælasögu', in *Rannsóknir í Félagsvísindum II*, ed. by Friðrik H. Jónsson (Reykjavík: Háskólaútgáfan, 1998), pp. 287–300.

⁵⁹ ÍF 8, p. 67 (ch. 25)

⁶⁰ Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Blót í norrænum sið*, pp. 98–99.

⁶¹ See also Jón Jóhannesson, *Íslendinga saga*, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Almenna bókafélagið, 1956), I, 73–78.

Þorsteinn was also, one might add, the custodian of the flame of his father's memory: 'Eðlilegur og sjálfsagður hluti þess starfs var að útrýma kristnum mönnum úr byggðarlaginu ef þeir vildu ekki láta af háttum sínum og semja sig að siðum og lögum meirihluta landsmanna'⁶² ('A natural and self-evident part of this work was to rid the community of Christians if they were not prepared to abandon their practices and accept the customs and laws of the majority of Icelanders'). Recent scholarship has offered more nuanced accounts of the role of a tenth-century *goði*, less confrontational models for Pagan-Christian relations in Iceland at this time,⁶³ and more persuasive accounts of later literary influences,⁶⁴ but if even the possibility of there having been some element of demonization of Christians and Christianity in Iceland before 1000 is acknowledged, along with the capacity of Ingimundr's descendants to influence emerging narratives concerning them, then Benjamin Eiríksson's formulation of events deserves its day in court.

In the reception history of *Vatnsdæla saga*, then, Hrolleifr and his kin have been anatomized, allegorized, dramatized, distorted, demonized, persecuted, and (even) sanctified by custodians of their story over time. Real and imagined records of their deeds have been associated with oral tradition, rune sticks, monastic vellums, humanist quartos, Victorian travelogues, Snæfellsnes playscripts, and privately published essays. The modern reception history of *Vatnsdæla* confirms that a willingness to think the unthinkable — or at least the unthought — can reinvigorate the perennial debate about the origins and early development of a major work in the *Íslendingasögur* corpus. Happy the saga that still attracts such speculation; and woe to the scholars, with or without snuff on their lapels, who no longer relish unconventional grit in their scholarly oysters, or improbable burrs under their scholarly saddles.

⁶² Jón Hnefill Aðalsteinsson, *Blót í norrænum sið*, p. 101.

⁶³ See, for example, Gunnar Karlsson, *Goðamenning: Staða og áhrif goðorðsmanna í þjóðveldi Íslendinga* (Reykjavík: Heimskringla, 2004), pp. 391–410.

⁶⁴ Hermann Pálsson finds biblical elements in the saga: 'Minnisgreinar um Vatnsdælu og Bandamanna sögu', *Húnavaka*, 25 (1985), 68–96; Kristín Bragadóttir, 'Veröld Vatnsdæla' (unpublished cand. mag. dissertation, University of Iceland, 1992) reads it as an allegory of good and evil and identifies Oddr Snorrason's Latin *Saga of Ólafir Tryggvason* as one possible model and Þingeyrar as the most likely place of composition: see, especially, pp. 84–102, 105–06.

SKANDERBEG: AN ALBANIAN HERO IN ICELANDIC CLOTHING

M. J. Driscoll

Nineteenth-century Iceland was awash with the written word — and by ‘written’ is meant hand-written, rather than printed, for though printing had come to Iceland in the early sixteenth century the vast majority of what may be termed popular literature continued to circulate in manuscript, even into the first decades of the twentieth century. This material chiefly comprised, in prose, the sagas, in particular the medieval romances (*riddarasögur*) and mythical heroic sagas (*fornaldarsögur*) and the works from the post-medieval period allegedly written in imitation of them, the so-called *lygisögur*, while popular verse was dominated by the *rímur*, themselves based chiefly on such sagas. Shorter works in verse, secular poems of an occasional nature, and hymns, prayers, and other works of popular piety were also largely confined to manuscripts. Alongside these there also circulated works derived from foreign sources, translations of German and Danish chapbooks, for example, and of shorter prose narratives from the late medieval and early modern period, including exempla, fables, and *Schwänke*, all of which generally went under the heading ‘ævintýri’, a term which could also cover more serious literary works, which appear to have reached Iceland principally through Danish.¹

One such work is ‘Sagan af Skanderbeg’, the story of Gjergj Kastrioti (1405–68), the Albanian national hero, better known as Skanderbeg. The saga was rather popular and is found in thirteen manuscripts, all from the nineteenth century; it was also the basis for a set of *rímur* composed in 1825 by sr. Hannes

¹ I discuss this material at length in *The Unwashed Children of Eve: The Production, Dissemination and Reception of Popular Literature in Post-Reformation Iceland* (London: Hisarlik, 1997).

Bjarnason á Ríp (1776–1838) and preserved in five manuscripts and printed as *Rímur af Skanderbeg Epirótakappa* in 1861.

The Life and Times of Gjergj Kastrioti (1405–1468)

Gjergj Kastrioti was born in Krujë, the son of Gjon Kastrioti, Lord of Middle Albania. According to the received biography, when his father was forced to submit to Turkish suzerainty Gjergj was given along with three of his brothers as hostage to the Sultan, Murad II (b. 1404, r. 1421–51), at Adrianopol, where he was circumcised, converted to Islam, and trained for military service as a janissary. Renamed Iskander (Alexander), after Alexander the Great, he led many successful campaigns for the Sultan, who rewarded him by giving him the title *bey*, hence Skanderbeg (in modern Albanian Skënderbeu). Following the defeat of the Turks by the renowned Hungarian general János Hunyadi at Niš in Serbia in 1443, Skanderbeg abandoned the Turkish side, abjured Islam, and through a stratagem reclaimed his family fortress at Krujë. On 2 March 1444 he called an assembly at Lezhë at which there was established a league of Albanian chieftains, over which he was elected to preside. Over the next twenty-five years, with support at various times from Venice, Naples, and the papacy, but with forces rarely exceeding twenty thousand men, he effectively repulsed thirteen consecutive invasions by the most powerful and technologically advanced army in the world at that time. In 1450 Murad II himself led a vast army, probably some 160,000 strong, against Skanderbeg, but was routed; later, in 1466, his son Mehmet II (b. 1432, r. 1451–81), known as ‘The Conqueror’, to whom Constantinople itself fell in 1453, also led an army, probably numbering in excess of 100,000 men, against the citadel at Krüje, but again to no avail. After Skanderbeg’s death — from natural causes — on 17 January 1468, Albania resisted the Turks for a further twelve years, but by 1478 Krujë had fallen and in 1480 Albania was finally conquered, remaining under Ottoman rule until 1912.²

² The standard work on the life of Skanderbeg is Bishop Fan Noli’s *George Castrioti Scanderbeg* (New York: International University Press, 1947), originally published in Albanian in 1921 as *Historia e Skënderbeut*; there is a recent biography, more a work of love than of scholarship, but eminently readable, by Harry Hodgkinson, *Scanderbeg: From Ottoman Captive to Albanian Hero* (London: I. B. Taurus, 2005). Scholarly literature on Skanderbeg is extensive; the bibliography published in Tiranë on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of his death comprises over a thousand items in twenty-one different languages.

Skanderbeg in European Literature

Already during his lifetime Skanderbeg's resistance to the Turks made him known throughout the western world as a 'defender of Christianity' and 'athlete of Christ', and works detailing his exploits began to appear soon after his death. The best known of these, and the principal source for all later writers on Skanderbeg, was *Historia de vita et gestis Scanderbegi Epirotarum principis*, written by the Albanian priest Marin Barleti (Marinus Barletius in Latin, Marino Barlezio in Italian) and published in Rome in between 1508 and 1510. Barleti was born around 1450 in Shkodër, and was thus near enough a contemporary of Skanderbeg to have had access to first-hand information. Nevertheless, his book is infused with the admiration of the ancients typical of the Renaissance humanists, and he was clearly at pains to fit his story into the Graeco-Roman mould.³

Translations of Barleti soon began to appear, into German in 1533, Italian in 1554, Portuguese in 1567, Polish in 1569; in France the book was translated and expanded by Jacques de Lavardin, published in 1576, complete with a sonnet by Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85). This book was then translated into English by one 'Z. I., Gentleman', now identified as Zachary Jones,⁴ and published in London in 1596 as *The historie of George Castriot, surnamed Scanderbeg, King of Albanie, containing his famous actes, his noble deedes of armes, and memorable victories against the Turkes, for the faith of Christ*. In place of the sonnet by Ronsard there was one by Edmund Spenser (1552–99). In the centuries that followed Skanderbeg appeared, often as the chief subject, in works by many of the major writers of western Europe, from Lope de Vega (1562–1635), who made him the subject of a play,⁵ to Lord Byron (1788–1824), who devotes two stanzas to him in *Childe*

³ On Barleti, see Minna Skaft-Jensen, 'En heltehistorie: Marin Barletis Skanderbeg mellem mundtlighed og skriftlighed', in *Fortælling og erfaring: tilegnet Johan Fjord Jensen*, ed. by Ole Birklund Andersen and others (Århus: Aarhus Universitetsforlag, 1988), pp. 135–58; this article is available online both in the original Danish and in an English version (<<http://miqesia.dk/Barleti-Scanderbeg.htm>> [11 September 2006]).

⁴ See Franklin B. Williams, Jr, 'Spenser, Shakespeare, and Zachary Jones', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 19 (1968), 205–12.

⁵ There is some doubt about the attribution: the play was published in 1639 under the name 'El Príncipe Escanderberg' in *Comedias de Lope de Vega Carpio, Parte veinte y ocho*, but also appeared in 1679 under the name 'El gran Jorge Castrioto, y Príncipe Escanderbeck' in *Comedias nuevas, escogidas de los mejores Ingenios de España, Parte qvarenta y cinco*, where it is attributed to Luís Vélez de Guevara (1579–1644) in the text, and to Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez (1598?–1650?) in the table of contents.

Harold's Pilgrimage (1812–19). There have also been operas on the Skanderbeg theme, at least three, one with music by Antonio Vivaldi (1675–1741), of which only four arias survive. It is safe to say that, until around 1900, when ‘the Turks’ stopped being perceived as a threat, any reasonably well-educated person living anywhere in Europe would probably have been as familiar with the figure of Skanderbeg as with his namesake, Alexander the Great.⁶

The story of Skanderbeg found its way to Denmark in the beginning of the eighteenth century with the publication in 1709 of an anonymous work with the title *Sandfærdige Beskrivelse om de tre Mægtigste Tørckiske Keysere, og derhos Arrigste Tyranner: nemlig Amurath den Anden, den Ottende Keyser. Mahumeth den Anden, Amurathis Søn. Item Solymannus den Tolfte Tørckiske Keyser [. . .]. Derhos de tre Berømmeligste Krigs-Heldtis Historier, som udi de Tider her i Christenheden haver levet, nemlig Johannes Corvinus Hunniades, Kongens udaf Ungerns General og Feldt-Herre, Georgius Castriotus eller Scanderberg Første udi Epiro og Albanien, Saaog Nicolaus Grefve af Serini [. . .]*. Although claiming on the title-page to have been *Af det Tydske Sprog paa Danske udsat*, its immediate source is unknown. The section on Skanderbeg, which covers some thirty pages (pp. 49–78), derives chiefly from Barleti. A fuller treatment, also based on Barleti, is found in Ludvig Holberg's *Adskillige store Heltes og berømmelige Mænds, sær Orientaliske og Indianske, sammenlignede Historier og Bedrifter efter Plutarchi Maade*, published in Copenhagen in 1739. As indicated in the title, Holberg draws his inspiration from Plutarch, who once compared outstanding Greek and Roman figures, and writes about twelve pairs, Skanderbeg being paired with Jan Žižka (c. 1370–1424), the Bohemian general who fought against the Emperor Sigismund in the Hussite wars of the fifteenth century. It is from Holberg's text that the Icelandic saga treatment derives.

Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín

In two unpublished nineteenth-century *catalogues raisonnées* of Icelandic writers — one, usually referred to as ‘Rithöfundatal’ (‘Register of authors’), by Hallgrímur

⁶ On the reception of Skanderbeg, see B. B. Ashcom, ‘Notes on the Development of the Scanderbeg Theme’, *Comparative Literature*, 5 (1953), 16–29; Josef Matl, ‘Georgius Castriota (Kastriot) Scanderbeg in der balkanischen und europäischen Literatur’, *Bulgarische Jahrbücher*, 1 (1968), 101–10; and Robert Elsie, ‘Benjamin Disraeli and Scanderbeg: The Novel “The Rise of Iskander” (1833) as a Contribution to Britain's Literary Discovery of Albania’, *Südost-Forschungen*, 52 (1993), 25–52.

Jónsson *djákni* (1780–1836), the other, known as ‘Fræðimannatal’ (‘Register of learned men’), by Einar Bjarnason á Mælifelli (1782–1856) — the clergyman and poet Jón Oddsson Hjaltalín (1749–1835), well known in his time as the author of hymns and prayers as well as a number of occasional poems, is credited with the writing of ten original and seven translated sagas. Among the latter is ‘Sagan af Skanderbeg’. None of the existing manuscripts of the saga is in Jón’s hand or contains any reference to him, so there is nothing, apart from the attributions by Hallgrímur and Einar, to link him specifically with it. We do know, however, that Jón was familiar with Holberg’s *Helte-Historier*, as they appear as one of the items on a list, headed simply ‘Sögr mynar’ (‘my sagas’), found on the last leaf (fol. 105^v) of Lbs 893 8°, a fragmentary manuscript in Jón’s hand from about 1800.⁷ Since all the extant manuscripts of the saga date from after 1803–04, it may be said that there is nothing to preclude his having written it either.

Evidence for Jón’s familiarity with the story of Skanderbeg is also found in another source, a short text entitled ‘Umm þá Makaláúsu hetiu Skanderbeg’ (‘On the peerless hero Skanderbeg’) in Lbs 638 8°, a miscellany in his hand dating from some time after 1811. Various discrepancies in certain key details — the number of sons mentioned in the opening lines, for example, or the way in which Skanderbeg is said to have got his name — suggest that it can hardly derive directly from Holberg’s *Helte-Historier*. About three quarters of the way through, however, Jón cites ‘hinn hálærði Barón Holberg’ (‘the most learned Baron Holberg’), but this is rather a reference to Holberg’s *Almindelig Kirke-Historie*, published in 1738, the year before the *Helte-Historier*, in which there is a brief treatment of Skanderbeg. Jón takes several passages directly from the *Kirke-Historie*, including one in which Skanderbeg’s greatest victories and death are described. There is a degree of overlap between Holberg’s two texts (i.e. several passages are more or less identical), and where there are grounds for comparison Jón’s translations of the passages in the later text seem decidedly more elegant than their counterparts in the saga, and more like Jón’s work generally.⁸ One might be tempted to conclude from this that the extant ‘Sagan af Skanderbeg’ is not, in fact, Jón’s work, although perhaps rather it simply shows that his prose style improved as he grew older.

⁷ See Driscoll, *Unwashed Children of Eve*, pp. 94–97.

⁸ Compare for example Jón’s translation of Voltaire’s *Zadig* in *Fjórar sögur frá hendi Jóns Oddssonar Hjaltalín: Sagan af Marroni sterka, Ágrip af Heiðarvíga sögu, Sagan af Zadig, Fimmbreðra saga* (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2006).

Sagan af Skanderbeg — Manuscripts

The earliest of the manuscripts preserving ‘Sagan af Skanderbeg’ (SS) is JS 34 4°, written over the course of the winter 1803–04. The manuscript contains, in its present state, eight items, of which SS is the seventh, occupying fols 160^r–173^v and bearing the title ‘Saga af Skanderbeg, þeim nafnfræga fursta í Epiro’. The other seven items are *Beyers saga*, a translated romance, *Þorsteins saga* (or *þáttur bæjarmagns*, a *fornaldarsaga*, *Þorsteins þáttur stangarhöggs*, one of the *Íslendingaþættir*, *Rauðúlfs þáttur*, part of *Ólafs saga helga*, *Gautreks saga og Gjafa-Refs* (the beginning of which is defective, lacking most of the first chapter), a *fornaldarsaga*, *Adonias saga*, an original romance, and *Cyrus saga Persakóns*, a seventeenth-century work based on various classical authors preserved in some thirty manuscripts altogether.⁹ According to a list of contents the manuscript originally also contained, before *Gautreks saga*, a text of *Ásmundar saga víkings*, a younger romance falling somewhere between *fornaldarsaga* and *riddarasaga* — in terms of its contents, in other words, this was a typical eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Icelandic ‘sögubók’.

The scribe identifies himself in several colophons as ‘G. Illugason’ and is presumably identical with the Guðmundur Illugason who writes his name in various places in the manuscript as the book’s rightful owner. A man by this name is mentioned in the census of 1816 as living at Bakkakot, then twenty-eight years old; he would therefore only have been fifteen or sixteen in 1803–04.¹⁰ Support for this identification is to be found in the preface to the volume, where it says:

Bókinn bidur alla sem af sier vilia gaman og gagn h[afa] ad fara vel med sig og láta sig vera óklickada [og] óvelgta annars vilie hún heldur ómakslaus f[y]rir s[ig] enn af þeim sem vilie af sier gaman þiggia eptir gr[ei]ndumm Skilmálumm vona jeg Lesendur lagfæri mig [og] lesi í máalid þar vyda mun adgiætlu vid þurfa þu[í] hún] er Ritud af ungumm og óvönnum Sögu Skrif[ara] a þeim Árumm 1803 og 1804

(The book invites all those wishing to derive from it pleasure and benefit to treat it well and allow it to remain unbattered and unbruised, otherwise it would rather be left alone, but for those who would like to enjoy it, in keeping with these aforementioned conditions, I hope that readers will correct me and interpret the language, because in many places care must be taken because it has been written by a young and untried saga-writer in the years 1803 and 1804.)

⁹ See Jakob Jónsson, ‘Kyrus í íslenzkum rímum’, in *Aukarit Rímnafélagsins*, 4 (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1973), pp. 9–13.

¹⁰ *Beyers saga*, ed. by Christopher Sanders (Reykjavík: Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, 2001), pp. cxix–cxxii.

This text is, on the whole, the one which is closest to Holberg's original Danish, and therefore, presumably, the best representative of the original Icelandic translation. It is conceivable that this has something to do with the very young age of the scribe at the time: being a newcomer, he would (arguably) have been less inclined (or able) deliberately to alter the text. He would, however, have had a greater tendency to error and omission, and in several instances there are better readings (i.e. readings closer to the Danish) to be found in some of the other manuscripts. It remains, however, the 'best text', and in the discussion which follows all quotations from the saga are taken from this manuscript.

Of the other twelve manuscripts two are written by unknown scribes. The first of these is in private ownership, MS nr. 5 8° in the collection of Guðmundur Helgason. Although anonymous the manuscript is dated — the colophon to SS, the first item, here called 'Sagann af Þeim Nafnfræga Fursta Skanderbeg', says it was completed '9 Februarj Mdcccx'. It contains, in addition to SS, the texts of four other sagas, two original and one translated romance, and *Cyrus saga Persakóns*, along with poetry of various kinds, some of which is in other, younger hands.

The other anonymous manuscript, Lbs 3625 4°, dates from some time in the early nineteenth century and bears the rather colourful title 'Nockrar Forn Manna fróðlegar Sögur, samann Teknar uppskrifadar og út giefnar Til Leifilegrar skiemtunar fyrir þá sem elska sögur, gamlann fróðleik, og góð dæmi. idkanir menta únga, enn gledia Gamla' ('Some informative sagas of men of old, collected, copied and published (!) for suitable entertainment for those who love sagas, ancient knowledge and good example, the exercise [of which] enlightens the young and entertains the old'). It is a large manuscript, containing in its present state twelve items (thirteen are listed in the table of contents), a mixture of *fornaldar*- and *riddarasögur*. SS is the sixth item in the manuscripts, and is entitled: 'Saga af Schanderberg, þeim nafnfræga fursta í Epíró'.

The remaining manuscripts are all by named scribes, among them some of the most prolific and best-known scribes of nineteenth-century Iceland. Two of the manuscripts were written by Einar Bjarnason, compiler of the 'Fræðimannatal' ('Register of learned men') mentioned above. The older of the two is ÍB 251 4°, written in 1806–07 at Brúnastaðir in Skagafjörður. In terms of content it is rather a mixed bag: in addition to SS, which has the title 'Sagan af þeirri ósigrandi hetju og nafnfræga Skanderbeg fursta í Epíró', it contains the texts of three sagas (*Sagan af Starkaði gamla* and *Friðþjófs saga*, both *fornaldarsögur*, and *Vatnsdæla*, an *Íslendingasaga*) and two sets of *rímur* (*Rímur af Arnljóti Upplendingakappa* and *Rímur af Haraldí kóngi Hilditönn* (i.e. *Brávallarímur*), both based on *fornaldarsögur*), along with various short poems and a short biographical sketch of Snorri Sturluson.

The other manuscript by Einar is ÍBR 21 4°, written in 1820 at Starrastaðir, also in Skagafjörður. It is one of many, ÍBR 11–31 4° (formerly ÍBR A. 18–26 and 28–39), containing various ‘söguþættir’ or short historical tales, principally dealing with the ancient world, many of which were compiled by Jón Espólín (1768–1836). In the same volume as SS, which here has the title ‘Sagan af þeim Nafn Fræga fursta Schanderbeg’ are ‘Sögur af Filippusi og Alexander mikla Macedoníukonungum’ on the one side and ‘Sagan af Jóhanni Ziska’ on the other.

Einar, described by sr. Ágúst Sigurðsson as ‘einn hinn fróðasti maður á Norðurlandi sinnar tíðar’ (‘one of the most knowledgeable men in the north [of Iceland] in his time’),¹¹ was a prime example of the *alþýðufræðimaður*, or ‘lay scholar’, who played so prominent a role in the dissemination of culture in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Iceland.

Another such ‘lay scholar’, probably the best known and most respected of them all, was Gísli Konráðsson (1787–1877), in whose hand there is a text of SS in the manuscript Lbs 1953 8°, written around 1830. Gísli, who lived most of his early life at Skörðugil and various other places in Seyluhreppur in Skagafjörður, but moved to Flatey in Breiðafjörður in 1852, was amazingly prolific, particularly in the area of local history, producing works such as *Húnavetninga saga*, *Strandamanna saga*, *Skagstrendinga saga og Skagamanna*, and *Barðstrendinga saga*, along with a large number of ‘sagnaþættir’, or short historical sketches. He was also an accomplished poet and the author of many *rímur*-cycles.¹²

Þorsteinn Gíslason á Stokkahlöðum in Eyjafjörður (1776–1838) was also a well-known poet and lay scholar, and there are many manuscripts in his hand in Landsbókasafn.¹³ Among them is Lbs 1305 8°, written in 1832 and containing a text of SS, here called ‘Sagan af Furstanum Skanderbeg’, which was completed according to the colophon on ‘29 Martj’. It is the second of nine items in the manuscript, the others principally being translated and original romances.

Þorsteinn Þorsteinsson á Heiði (1792–1863) was one of the more productive scribes of the nineteenth century. He was born at Hamar í Fljótum in Skagafjörður. His father, Þorsteinn Guðmundsson, had attended the school at Hólar,

¹¹ Sr. Ágúst Sigurðsson, *Forn frægðarsetur – í ljósi liðinnar sögu*, [vol. 1] (Reykjavík: Bókamiðstöðin, 1976), p. 228. Einar is also described in *Eimreiðin*, 14 (1908), 181–82, in an obituary of his (illegitimate) son Guðmundur (1823–65).

¹² Jón Guðnason, ‘Gísli Konráðsson’, *Merkir Íslendingar*, Nýr flokkur, 5 (1966), 89–113.

¹³ *Íslenzkar æviskrár frá landnámstímum til ársloka 1940*, ed. by Páll Eggert Ólason, 6 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag, 1948–76), v, 203; Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal* (Reykjavík: Rímnafélagið, 1966), II, 148.

graduating in 1783 (he had not been a good student, and was not able to secure a living), but the younger Þorsteinn had no formal education. He spent most of the early part of his life at the farm Heiði í Sléttuhlíð and then later lived on the island Málmey, both also in Skagafjörður. He began collecting and copying manuscripts at an early age, producing a very large number in the course of his lifetime. There are about sixty manuscripts in his hand (principally Lbs 660–706 4°), altogether some sixteen thousand pages. The earliest of them date from about 1810 and the latest from 1860. They are about equally divided between *rímur*, altogether some two hundred different cycles, and prose sagas, all the major genres of which are represented. There are also collections of poetry, accounts of travel in the Middle East ('Reisubækur'), and texts on Roman and Greek mythology. Unfortunately, as Páll Eggert Ólason comments in *Íslenskar æviskrár*, 'allt er mjög óvandað frá hendi hans' ('everything he did was rather slipshod').

Lbs 676 4° was written c. 1840–50. SS, which bears the title 'Sagann af þeim nafn fræga fursta SKANDERBEG Epiróta kappá', is the first item in the manuscript. The other items mainly consist of material pertaining to the ancient world, including many short texts added 'til uppfillingar' ('as filler'), while the last item is 'Endir á Hulldarsögu' (chs 25–29), which Þorsteinn explains is 'uppskrifad eptir Hulldarsögu sem Einar á Mælifelli hefir ritad en nú er í eigu Guðm. skrifara sonar hans' ('copied from Huldar saga which Einar á Mælifelli has written and which is now in the possession of his son Guðmundur').¹⁴

Lbs 854 b 8° was written in 1860 by Einar Guðnason (1835–1901) from Sleggjulækur í Stafholtstungum in Borgarfjörður. SS is the first of only two items in the manuscript, the other being 'Saga af Gunnari Kieldugnúps-Fíbli', one of the younger *Íslendingasögur*. There is no title (the title page is missing), but the hero's name is written 'Schanderberg' throughout. Einar was the author of two sets of *rímur* and much poetry besides.¹⁵

The largest of the manuscripts preserving SS is Lbs 1767 4°, written between 1857 and 1863 by Jóhannes Jónsson (1798–1877), from Smyrlahóll in

¹⁴ Interest in *Huldar saga* was great in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, chiefly as it had according to *Sturlunga saga* been related by Sturla Þórðarson to the court of King Magnús *lagabætir* in 1263, but no saga had survived from the Middle Ages. There is a younger saga with this name, however, preserved in several recensions, one of which has been ascribed to Jón Espólin. On *Huldar saga*, see Konrad Maurer, *Die Huldar saga* (Munich: Königlich-bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1894).

¹⁵ On Einar, see *Íslenskar æviskrár*, ed. by Páll Eggert Ólason, I, 354, and Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, II, 34–35.

Haukadalur, Dalasýsla.¹⁶ Although relatively little of what he produced has survived — only seven complete manuscripts plus a few fragments — Jóhannes appears to have been one of the more prolific scribes of the nineteenth century. By his own account he copied several hundred hymns and poems, forty-nine sets of *rímur*, and over 130 saga texts, most of them more than once, some perhaps as many as twenty times.¹⁷ The title page of 1767 reads: ‘Tuttugu og sex FORN SÖGUR af Keisurum, Konúngum, Hertugum, Greifum, barónum, bændum, þjónum og þrælum, vænum og vondum. Samansafnaðar og ritaðar af Jóhannesi Jónssyni’ (‘Twenty-six sagas of emperors, kings, dukes, earls, barons, farmers, servants, and slaves, good and evil; collected and copied by Jóhannes Jónsson’). It contains, in addition to SS, a mixture of *fornaldarsögur* and original *riddarasögur*, mostly of the younger variety.

Three of the thirteen manuscripts of SS are written by one man, Magnús Jónsson, from Tjaldanes in Dalasýsla.¹⁸ Magnús, who died in 1922 at the age of eighty-six, spent much of his time copying sagas, which he collected under the general title ‘Fornmannasögur Norðurlanda’ (‘sagas of the ancient men of the north’). There is a full set, numbering twenty volumes, each of exactly eight hundred pages, in Landsbókasafn Íslands (Lbs 1491–1510 4°). According to the dates on the title pages these volumes were written between 1880 and 1909. They are not in chronological order, however; the oldest is vol. X, written in 1880, and the youngest vol. XI, written twenty-nine years later. Copies of twelve of the volumes also exist separately, three in Landsbókasafn and nine in private ownership. There are a further nine manuscripts in Magnús’s hand containing similar material, but without the title ‘Fornmannasögur Norðurlanda’, most apparently pre-dating the earliest dated volumes. Altogether, these forty-one manuscripts contain texts of a total of 162 sagas; of well over half of these there are two, three, or even four copies.

As to the nature of the material itself, the contents of the ‘Fornmannasögur Norðurlanda’ collection can be divided up according to accepted modern generic distinctions as follows: there are thirty-one *fornaldarsögur*, twenty-nine original and nine translated *riddarasögur*, forty-eight of the younger Icelandic prose romances sometimes referred to as *lygisögur* (‘lying sagas’), twenty-eight of what

¹⁶ *Dalamenn: æviskrár 1703–1961*, ed. by Jón Guðnason (Reykjavík: [n.pub.], 1961–66), I, 307.

¹⁷ See Driscoll, *Unwashed Children of Eve*, pp. 64–67.

¹⁸ On Magnús, see Driscoll, *Unwashed Children of Eve*, pp. 55–59; I am currently preparing a lengthy study of Magnús’s manuscripts.

might be termed ‘reconstituted’ *fornaldarsögur*, that is, works written after the Reformation on the basis of older material, principally Saxo, thirteen translations of German or Danish chapbooks, and finally four of what would at the time have been termed ‘ævintýri’, including ‘Sagan af Skanderbeg’. Although this may seem a rather curious ragbag of material, Magnús’s scribal production is exceptionally homogeneous by nineteenth-century standards. There are, for example, no *rímur* preserved in his hand, nor indeed any poetry of any kind, apart from the verses found in several of the *fornaldarsögur*. Nor are there any of the genealogical works (*ættartölur*), biographies (*ævisögur*), and so on produced by lay scholars such as Gísli Konráðsson and with which nineteenth-century Icelandic manuscripts abound. Instead, Magnús focussed on what for him must have been a single genre, however amorphous or ill-defined it may appear to our modern sensibilities — which was, basically, what ordinary people read.

What makes Magnús especially interesting is not just the volume and nature of his production, but also that in his later manuscripts, those written after 1888, Magnús includes a preface to each of the sagas, presumably in imitation of scholarly editions such as *Fornmannasögur*¹⁹ and C. C. Rafn’s *Fornaldar Sögur Nordrlanda*,²⁰ both of which he knew. In these prefaces Magnús usually explains how he got hold of his text and how it compares to other texts of the saga known to him. He mentions also if there are *rímur* based on the saga. On the basis of all this he speculates on the saga’s age, assuming, not unreasonably, that the more widely disseminated a saga is, and the more variation there is between copies, the older it is likely to be.

The oldest of the three manuscripts in Magnús’s hand is OsloUB 1159 8°. It consists of 163 leaves, paginated 1–80 and 1–246, and contains six sagas, of which SS is the last, the others being the usual mixture of *fornaldar*- and *riddarasögur*. The manuscript is in cursive script, apart from the last leaf, which is written in Magnús’s ‘normal’, that is, his pseudo-medieval, almost uncial, hand, with a great many abbreviations. This, the fact that it is not eight hundred pages, and the absence of a title suggest that the manuscript is to be dated to before 1880, when Magnús began putting his collection together.

The other two are dated and form part of the ‘Fornmannasaga’ collection; both also have prefaces, albeit rather short. The older of the two is in private ownership, having been presented by Magnús to his daughter Kristín, but it was

¹⁹ Copenhagen: Popp, 1825–37.

²⁰ Copenhagen: Popp, 1829–30.

lent to Landsbókasafn for my benefit and photographed digitally. The title-page reads: 'Fornmannasögr Norðurlanda Fimtánda bindi Skrifaðar eptir bókum ok handritum M.D.C.C.C.X.C.V.I.I.' SS is the ninth of ten items, and is preceded by *Sagan af Líkafrón* and followed by *Sagan af Fástus og Ermenu*, both post-Reformation romances. SS is also found in Lbs 1505 4°, written three years later, in 1900. According to the title page this is also 'Fornmannasögr Norðurlanda fimtánda bindi', but the contents are not exactly the same as the other (this is in fact common where there is more than one copy of a given volume); there are only nine items, seven of which are found in the other manuscript, but in a slightly different order. The preface to 1505 reads: 'Sögu þessa hefi ek átt á blöðum er ek feck eptir foreldra mína, hón er víða til í handriti' ('I have had [the text of] this saga on leaves which I inherited from my parents; it is found widely in manuscripts'). The same preface is found in the other manuscript, without the final clause. Magnús's text of the saga in the oldest manuscript is essentially the same as in all the other manuscripts, but in the younger two he has made a number of stylistic changes, about which I shall have more to say presently.

Differences Between the Danish Original and Icelandic Translation

The Icelandic translation, as has been said, is a close — in places almost slavish — translation of Holberg's Danish. There are no major omissions or additions, but a great many smaller ones, some significant, others less so. Compare the following, taken from the beginning and the end of the two texts:

Ecke mörgum arumm adur enn Tirkíar jfirunnu Constantinópel rykte í Epiro eirn kongur ad nafne Johanes Castriótus hann átte 4 sonu hin jngste nefndest Georgíus firir hans fæding urdu undur mikil og firir burder er bodudu það stóra nafn sem hann af sínum miklum afreks verkum fieck, sagt er <og> hann hafe verid fæddur med merke á handlegnum sem var likt einu sverde

(Not many years before the Turks overran Constantinople there ruled in Epirus a king named Johannes Castriotus. He had four sons; the youngest was named Georgius. Before his birth there were great marvels and

Noget for Constantinopels Erobring og det Østlige Keiserdoms Undergang regierede i Epiro en Første ved Navn Johannes Castriotus, hvilken havde 4 Sønner, hvoraf den yngste, som heed Georgius, er den Helt, hvis Levnet jeg beskriver. For hans Fødsel siges at være skeede adskillige underlige Ting, hvoraf man gjorde sig Spaadomme om det store Navn, han ved sine Bedrifter vilde erhverve; der siges ogsaa, at han var fød med et Merke paa sin Arm, som lignede et Sværd.

(Some time before the conquest of Constantinople and the fall of the Eastern Empire there ruled in Epirus a prince with the name Johannes Castriotus; he had four sons, of whom the youngest, whose name was

portents which prophesied the great fame which he through his great deeds of valour achieved; it is <also> said that he was born with a mark on his arm which resembled a sword.)

Georgius, is the hero whose life I relate. It is said that before his birth many strange things happened, which were thought to prophesy the great renown which he through his deeds would gain; it is also said that he was born with a mark on his arm which resembled a sword.)

Hans historia er skrifud af mörgum, enn best af Marino Barletto sem var Epirótiskur hann vitnar að þegar Tirkíar jnntöku síðar þann stad hvar Scanderbeg var grafenn þá hafa þeir upp grafed hans líkama og teked mörg stícke af hans beinum hvað þeir hielldu sem annann helge dóm já heingdu umm hálssa sína, Meinande að lucka og far sælld mundi síer þar af standa, og endar svo æfe sögu þess mikla Scanderbegs.

Hans Historie er beskrevet af mange, men udførligst af Marino Barletto en Epirote udi 13 Bøger, som jeg fornemmeligen har fuldt. Samme Barlettus vidner, at da Tyrkerne siden bemægtige sig den Stad, hvorudi han laae begravet, opgrove de hans Legeme, og deele Strykker af hans Beene mellem sig, hvilke de ansaae som Helligdommer, ja hange dem om deres Halse, bildende sig ind, at Lykke og Velsignelse deraf vilde flyde

(His story has been told by many but best by Marin Barleti, who was an Epirote. He reports that when the Turks later captured the place where Skanderbeg was buried, they dug up his body and took many pieces of his bones, which they regarded as they would any other holy relic, even hung them round their necks, thinking that this would bring them luck and good fortune, and thus ends the life story of the great Skanderbeg.)

(His story has been told by many, but most completely by Marin Barleti, an Epirote, in thirteen books, which I have largely followed. The said Barleti reports that when the Turks later captured the city in which he lay buried, they dug up his body and divided pieces of his bones amongst themselves, even wearing them about their necks, thinking that luck and good fortune would follow from it.)

It is perhaps insignificant that, in the very first sentence, the phrase 'og det Østlige Keiserdoms Undergang' ('and the fall of the Eastern Empire') is omitted in the Icelandic translation, which instead mentions explicitly that it was the Turks to whom Constantinople fell; it must certainly be significant, however, that Holberg's first person statement at the beginning ('den Helt, hvis Levnet jeg beskriver') and his reference to his source at the end ('udi 13 Bøger, som jeg fornemmeligen har fuldt') are both omitted, presumably as such first person statements are unknown in Icelandic saga style. It would be equally 'ungrammatical' to end a saga simply by breaking off the narrative, and a final rubric has duly been added. Many other changes seem similarly to have been made in order to adapt the text to Icelandic narrative conventions.

One of the first tests of Skanderbeg's prowess comes when the Sultan's court at Adrianople (now Edirne) is visited by 'en hovmodig Scythisk Kiempe' ('an overbearing Scythian warrior'), which in the Icelandic becomes 'eírn og narlegur

berserkur ur Schytía' ('a fearsome berserk from Scythia'). The word 'Kiempe' is in several other places 'translated' with the Icelandic word 'kempa', but as this particular *kempa* behaves unmistakably like a *berserkr* it is easy to understand why that word has been used here; in fact, the whole scene in the Icelandic translation has been influenced by the many similar scenes in the *fornaldar*- and *riddarasögur*:

þegar Skanderbeg eptir margar sigur vinningar kom aptur til Adrianopel sem þá var þeirra Tirknesku Soldana að setur stadur þá kom þar einn ognarlegur berserkur ur Schytía sem til að sína hvað mikels háttar hann væ skorade á hólum við sig hvörn sem þirde af öllum lids fiöllda Tirkia keisara enn einginn vogade að fást við óvin þennann þó Amurath frammbíðe margar sámdir til þess. Skanderbeg gíck þá all einn til ein vígsins við berserkenn og eptir mikla vörn og að sókn féldi hann hann og varð ei sár

(When after winning many victories Skanderbeg returned to Adrianople, which at that time was the Turkish sultans' place of residence, there came a fearsome berserk from Scythia, who in order to show how great he was challenged anyone of the sultan's entire army who dared to meet him in single combat, but no one dared to tackle that enemy, even though Murad offered many honours in exchange. Skanderbeg then went all alone to fight the berserk and after much defence and attack slew him and was not wounded.)

Da han efter mange Seyervindinger kom tilbage til Adrianopel igien, som da var de Tyrkiske Sultaners Sæde, lod der sig indfinde en hovmodig Scythisk Kiempe, der for at lade see sin Styrke og Manddom, udfordrede en af Sultanens Folk til Kamp. Men ingen havde Lyst til at binde an med denne grumme Scythier, undtagen Scanderbeg, hvilken alleene dristede sig dertil, og lykkeligen fældede denne store Kiempe.

(When after winning many victories he returned to Adrianople, which at that time was the Turkish sultans' place of residence, there came an overbearing Scythian warrior who in order to demonstrate his strength and manhood challenged one of the sultan's men to combat, but no one wanted to take on this ferocious Scythian, apart from Skanderbeg, who alone dared to do it and fortunately slew the huge warrior.)

In Skanderbeg's first battle after his defection, the Danish text says that he 'gik den store Tyrkiske Mængde i møde, og det med saadan Tapperhed, at han erholdt en fuldkommen Seyer' ('went against the large Turkish force, and with such bravery that he won a complete victory'), whereas the Icelandic only says that he 'lagde til orustu við Ale' ('met Ali in battle'), that is to say Ali Bassa, the leader of the Turkish forces, although he adds 'sem hafði ofur fiöllda lids' ('who had a great force of men'). This personalization, that is, the substitution of the name of the leader for that of the army, is common in the Icelandic translation. Battles in the romances tend to be presented as conflicts between the two opposing leaders, and this change must be deliberate. Another very clear example of this is where Holberg has '4 Tyrkiske Krigshære under 4 adskildte Anførere' ('four Turkish

armies under four separate commanders'), which becomes '4 Tirkneska stridsherra ásamt með þeirra her' ('four Turkish commanders with their armies'), and yet another where Holberg says that Mehmed sent 'tvende Krigshære mod Epirum' ('two armies against Epirus'), which in the Icelandic becomes '2 strids höfðinga' ('two commanders').

Typical phrases or formulaic expressions from the romances are frequently used in the Icelandic, not least in the battle scenes: one battle described in the Danish as 'haard og blodig' ('hard and bloody') becomes in the Icelandic 'bæde hörd mannskæd og laung' ('both hard, involving much loss of life, and long'); in another the Danish says that 'længe blev figted med stor Haardnakkenhed paa begge sider' ('long it was fought with great determination on both sides'), which becomes in the Icelandic 'hun var bæde hörd og láung og leinge óvist hver sigra munde' (it [*sc.* the battle] was both long and hard and for a long time unclear who would win'). In one battle Holberg says of Skanderbeg that he had advanced alone so far into the Turkish ranks that his men thought him lost, but that he 'udviklede sig igien' ('extricated himself again'), which in the Icelandic becomes 'rudde síer götu i giegnum herin fram til sinna manna' ('cleared a path through the [enemy] troops back to his men'), a phrase from the romances. The Sultan Mehmet is described as being 'fast rasende' ('quite furious') in the Danish, which becomes 'ólmur af reide so gieck hann nærre af vitenu' ('furious with anger, so that he nearly lost his wits'), again, a formulaic phrase. 'Ballabanus igien ikkun med nogle faa undkom' ('Ballabanus again escaped with only a few men') becomes 'Ballabanus asamt nockrumm fáum komst með hlaupe undan hitt var allt á flotta drepd edur fangad' ('Ballabanus together with a few men managed to escape through flight; the others were all killed or captured').

The translation also adds the occasional adjective or adverb: 'hvilke Tanker' ('what opinion') becomes 'hve stóra þánka' ('what high opinion'); 'myrde ham' ('murder him') becomes 'mirda hann sofande' ('murder him in his sleep'). Occasionally where Holberg has one adjective the Icelandic will have two, for example, 'Redelighed' ('integrity') becomes 'trigd og trúskap' ('fidelity and faithfulness'), 'Scanderbegs Hoved og Arme' ('Skanderbeg's head and arms') becomes 'Scanderbegs skarpvitra höfde og sterku arm leggium' ('Skanderbeg's sharp-witted head and strong arms'); the opposite is also true, however, although far less frequently, for example where 'mild og naadig' ('mild and merciful') becomes simply 'mildur' ('mild').

Explanations of unfamiliar terms are sometimes added in the Icelandic translation: 'Sanzach, som er næst ved en Bassas Værdighed' ('Sanzach, which is next in rank to a Bassa') becomes 'sanzach sem er næstur Bassa edur jfer hers höfðingia

tign' ('Sanzach, which is next in rank to a Bassa or general'), 'Commendanten' ('the Commandant') becomes 'Commendantin eda Borgar vörðurinn' ('the Commandant or defender of the citadel'), and 'det [...] Ottomaniske Monarchie' ('the Ottoman monarchy') becomes '[það] Ottómaníska edur Tirkia einvals dæme' ('the Ottoman or Turkish monarchy'). On the other hand, the phrase 'Dabrenserne, hvoraf Besætningen mestendeels bestoed' ('The Dibrians, who made up the bulk of the garrison') becomes simply 'strids mennerner' ('soldiers'), presumably because the translator didn't know what 'Dabrenserne' were: inhabitants of the town Debar (Albanian Dibra), in present-day Macedonia.²¹

The translation sometimes differs slightly from the original, although nothing which could not be read out of the text, such as when 'beslattede han strax at hævne sig' ('decided immediately to avenge himself') becomes 'vard hann reidur miög' ('became very angry'), or 'indlagt store Ære' ('gained great honour') becomes 'margann sigur unned' ('won many a victory').

Holberg relates in one place how in a letter to Skanderbeg the Sultan 'gjør ham store Løfter' ('makes him great promises'), which becomes 'lofar hönumm miklum gull fiöllumm' ('promises him great mountains of gold'). Describing Skanderbeg's response to the letter Holberg says simply 'Paa dette Brev fulgte ikke andet end et frekt Svar' ('this letter resulted in nothing other than a bold answer'), whereas the Icelandic expands this significantly: 'Skanderbeg gaf hönumm eckert gott svar aptur og sagdest hafa for þienad allt gott af hönumm en þo hefde hann viliad ræna sig sínu erfda rike sviked af life brædur sina og ætlad sier eirnin dauda og margt fleira bar hann á bryn' ('Skanderbeg did not give him a positive answer, saying that he had deserved only good from him but that instead he had tried to take away from him his hereditary kingdom, treacherously murdered his brothers and tried to kill him, and accused him of much else'). The very next sentence reads 'hvorudover Sultanen skikkede først en Krigshær af 9000 Mænd mod Epirum' ('at which the Sultan sent an army of nine thousand men against Epirus'), which is also expanded in the Icelandic to 'hvar af Soldán sá sier dugde ei fagur galenn og sende því 9000 hermanna til Epyrumm' ('from which the Sultan saw that flattery would get him nowhere and therefore sent nine thousand soldiers to Epyrus').

There is also additional information where it is said that on his deathbed Skanderbeg, hearing that the Turks had invaded, tried to get up and put on his armour; the Icelandic adds: 'enn þegar Tirkiair heirdu að hann være her klæddur fljdu þeir

²¹ *Holberg-ordbog*, ed. by Aage Hansen and others (Copenhagen: Reitzel, 1981–88), I, col. 1028.

strags og villdu ecke bjda' ('and when the Turks heard that he was dressed in his armour they immediately fled and did not wish to remain').

Towards the end of the narrative a passage of some seventy words describing conflicting reports in various sources relating to a trip Skanderbeg made to Italy in search of support during the last siege of Krujë (in fact corresponding to the whole of Barleti's Book XII) is omitted entirely. The description of Skanderbeg immediately following this is padded out significantly, however. The Danish text reads 'Hans Tapperhed og Manddom var geleidet af Naade og Mildhed' ('his bravery and manhood were accompanied by mercy and lenience'), which in the Icelandic becomes 'firir utan hans furdanlega hreiste og hetiuskap hafde hann þetta til að bera: hann var miög fridur og tignarlegur, herra-manna mestur og sterkastur og astudlegastur við vinnu sína trúfastur og náðugur við líd sitt eírnenn þar með ör og stórgjöfull' ('in addition to his amazing prowess and heroicism he also had these qualities: he was very handsome and dignified, the greatest and strongest of men, and most loving towards his friends, loyal and kind to his men and also open-handed and generous') — all the qualities regularly ascribed to kings and chieftains in the sagas. The Danish goes on to say that Skanderbeg 'havde ogsaa en særdeels Nidkierhed for den Christelige Troe' ('had also an especial passion for the Christian faith'), which in the Icelandic is 'híer að auka var Scanderbeg síerdeiles Guðhræddur og svo vandlátur firir þá Christelegu trú hvora hann harðfeingalega varð umm alla sinna daga' ('in addition Skanderbeg was exceptionally God-fearing and rigorous regarding the Christian faith, which he staunchly defended all his days').

Finally, Holberg's overall assessment of Skanderbeg, that he was 'den største Helt, som Naturen har dannet' ('the greatest hero Nature has produced'), becomes 'sú allra stærsta hetia sem Guð hefur skapað' ('the greatest hero God has ever made'), with a substitution of God for Nature of which the enlightened Holberg would scarcely have approved.

Developments in the Icelandic Text

It would not be unusual for a saga of this length — over 6500 words — to be divided up into chapters. There are none in Holberg, and none in eight of the manuscripts of the saga, but in five manuscripts chapter divisions have been added. In three of these (the Guðmundur Helgason MS from 1820, Lbs 1305 8° from 1832, and Lbs 676 4° from c. 1840–50) there are ten chapters, in one (Lbs 1767 4° from 1862) there are twelve, and in one (Lbs 1953 8° from c. 1830) there are eighteen, complete with titles (e.g. chapter 1, 'Uppfæding Schanderbegs'). The

three manuscripts in which the saga has been divided into ten chapters are demonstrably related in other ways too, while the chapter division in the other two manuscripts appears to have been made independently.

In several of the manuscripts verses have been added following the text of the saga proper. The earliest of these is ÍB 251 4°, written by Einar Bjarnason in 1806–07, where there are three stanzas in skaldic metre (*dróttkvæður háttur*) in which Skanderbeg is compared to the Old Testament heroes David and Judas Maccabeus:

Audlíng æve lánga, elfde Stríded Dávid
Goliath fyrir gretu, Gøndlar lét hann fólna
Hædstu hladdinn listum, hari Golners skara,
leik nam laungum vekja, líd Astaroths Tíðum,

Maccabeus mækir, merkur Judas Sterke
hátt bar hnigu drotter, hans i vigra danse,
Tíranna réð Tønnum, Tírfings driúgum stinga
varde valþíngs hirðir, vel frön Guds síjonar

aullum meir um allan, aldur grænnra skiallda
skar i skurum stíriar, Skanderbegus fianda
hreiste harla geistur, hrotta Epiri drottenn
lof hans ríkt á riáfrum, róme Christinn dómur.

(They wept for the prince of battle. David made war throughout his long life; he made Goliath grow pale. Endowed with the highest qualities, the lord of Golner's horde (> leader) could awaken the game of Astaroth's troops (> battle), long and often.

Strong Judas Maccabeus held high the sword; his princes fell in the dance of killings (> battle). Tíranna could stab many with Tírfing's teeth (> sword); the keeper of the slaughter-meeting (> warrior) defended the land of God's Zion well.

The greatest of all time, Skanderbeg split the green shields of his enemies in the showers of battle, the valiant lord of Epirotes, swift with the sword; may Christendom richly sing his praises to the roof.)

The same three stanzas, with some slight variations, are found in the Guðmundur Helgason manuscript from 1820, along with a fourth stanza, added between the second and third; this additional stanza, which differs markedly from the others in character and is almost certainly of independent origin, is also found, on its own and with significant variation (suggesting oral transmission), in two other manuscripts, Lbs 1305 8° and Lbs 676 4°:

Skanderbeg opt með skindi, skundadi Tyr's ad fundi
og undrum með tirkium tíndi, títt andvigi reinandi
reindu þeir stirk hans stundum, so standast eý náðu i landi
fórust flestir og týndust, fiandans i vald hrapandi

(Skanderbeg hastened to battle, killing Turks wonderously; often trying to match him, they sometimes tested his strength; they were unable to hold the country, most were killed and lost, falling into Satan's power.)

Below this in the Guðmundur Helgason manuscript there is yet another verse, bearing some resemblance to this fourth *dróttkvætt* stanza but in ordinary *ferskeytt* metre:

Skanderbegus Skifde Rønd
þá skunda náde tijrs á fund
Auder Mistu hans firer hønd
hundar leidir Marga Stund

(Skanderbeg clove shields when he hastened to battle; through his hand many loathsome dogs lost their lives.)

In addition to these various accretions, the saga has undergone a certain amount of stylistic adjustment. The language of the Icelandic translation, as has been said, is heavily influenced by the original Danish, both in vocabulary and syntax, and some of the more glaring Danicisms have been smoothed out in the course of transmission. This is particularly noticeable in the three manuscripts written by Magnús í Tjaldanesi. In the earliest of them, written some time before 1880, the text is essentially the same as that found in other manuscripts, but in the text as preserved in the younger two, written respectively in 1897 and 1900, Magnús has made a large number of changes, almost all of which could be said to be in the interest of language purity. These include adjustments to the syntax, so that, for example, 'þeirra tyrknesku soldana adsetur stadur' becomes 'aðsetustaðr þeirra tyrknesku sóldana'; the substitution of ordinary verbs for gerund constructions, for example 'auglýsti' for 'auglísande'; the substitution of some of the foreign terms and place names with terms and names likely to be more familiar to an Icelandic audience, such as 'Mikligarður' for 'Constantínópel' or 'höfuðsmaður' for 'Hospodar'.²² In Holberg and, following him, the original Icelandic translation, Latin endings are used in (Latinate) names of persons and places, and in accordance with the case they would take in Latin, rather than Icelandic, for example 'til Epyrum'; these are transformed in Magnús's later manuscripts, generally so that the nominative is used throughout for personal names, for example 'setja í gíslíng sinn únga son Georgíus' instead of 'setia í gyslíng sinn únga son Georgiumm', and the dative for place names; 'til Epyrum', for example, becomes 'til Epíró'. The principal change in Magnús's younger texts, however, is that the

²² There are already some examples of this in the original translation, such as 'austur og norður álfu heimsins' for 'Europa og Asia' and 'Valland' for 'Italien'.

more obvious Danish loan words have been replaced with native (or less obviously borrowed) words. Here are a few examples:

soddan virðingu – mikils orðstýrs
 svolleiðis – þannig
 heimuglega – leynilega
 friðstilli – blíðka
 utsléttast – upprættast
 þenkti – ásetti sér
 meina – hygga
 meining – ætlun
 befaling – skipan
 helslá – drepa
 í einum ríkk – á stuttum tíma
 útslétt – afmáð

Magnús had very firm ideas about saga style and was certainly not above altering the texts he copied — even when copying from printed sources — in order to bring them into line with these ideas. In his prefaces Magnús often uses the term ‘búningr’, normally ‘dress’, ‘clothing’, or ‘attire’, to describe a saga’s style, as distinct from its plot (which he calls ‘sagan’). What he has done with *Skanderbeg* is to complete the job begun by the Icelandic translator, removing what remained of his Danish suit and dressing him entirely in Icelandic *vaðmál*.

Rímur af Skanderbeg

The story of *Skanderbeg* underwent a further transformation when it served as the basis for a set of *rímur* — that most Icelandic of genres — composed in 1825 by sr. Hannes Bjarnason (1776–1838) from Ríp in Skagafjörður. The *rímur* are preserved in five manuscripts (Lbs 691 4°, Lbs 2173 4°, JS 95 8°, JS 98 8°, and ÍB 206 4°) and printed as *Rímur af Skanderbeg Epirótakappa* in Akureyri in 1861. Hannes is the author of at least four other sets of *rímur*, two of them with Gísli Konráðsson.²³ Although he could have heard of *Skanderbeg* from Gísli, in whose hand there is a text of the saga from about the same time, Hannes says in the introductory section (*mansöngur*) of the first fit (I.6–7) that he has been sent a

²³ On Hannes, see Finnur Sigmundsson, *Rímnatal*, II, 62–63; *Íslenzkar æviskrár*, ed. by Páll Eggert Ólason, II, 304–05.

copy of the saga by someone he doesn't know along with a request that he compose a set of *rímur* on the subject:

Mjer ókenndur mærdar tón
mig það rekkur smíða,
fáir neita fyrstu bón,
finnst svo máltak lýða.

Ævintýr mjer sendi sá
Suðurálfu búa;
örðugt veita mjer því má
mærdir í að snúa.

(A man unknown to me asked me to make a verse; few refuse a first request, as the saying goes.

He sent me on an adventure among southern peoples; it will cause me some difficulty to turn it into verse.)

The *rímur* are, as *rímur* tend to be, a line-by-line retelling of the prose, leaving nothing out and adding only incidental detail in order to make the alliteration or rhyme. The story is divided into ten fits, with the divisions corresponding more or less to the chapter divisions in three of the extant manuscripts of the saga, mentioned above. The fits, eight of which employ variants of the four-line *ferskeytt* verse form, and two the three-line verse form *stuðlafall*, each comprise between sixty-nine and ninety-five verses, of which anywhere from six to nineteen make up the *mansöngur* or non-narrative introductory section with which each fit traditionally begins. The narrative section of each fit begins with one or sometimes two verses stating that the story will now be taken up from where it had been broken off, but adding no new information, and each ends with a verse, occasionally two, saying essentially that the fit has come to an end. There are also nine verses at the end of the final fit which constitute an epilogue. Not counting the *mansöngvar* and 'links', we can say that roughly seven hundred verses are used to tell the story. There are, on average, sixteen words per verse, giving a total of approximately 11,200 words in the narrative verses. Holberg's text is 6600 words, the Icelandic saga about the same, the omissions and additions essentially cancelling each other out; the *rímur* are thus nearly twice the length of the prose. In general, each phrase or meaningful unit in the prose corresponds to a complete three- or four-line verse. The padding out is chiefly accomplished through the use of kennings and other formulaic expressions.

To take but one example, chosen at random:

so að han fieck eina þá borg strax er best var og ram bigdust i Epiró. En sem hann hafde inn tekid hana liet hann strax helslá það Tirneska varnar lid og yfir vann so i einumm rick allar þær borger i landenu.

(So he immediately got that citadel which was the best and strongest in Epirus. And as soon as he had taken it he had the Turkish defence force slain and within a short time conquered all the citadels in the country.)

This passage becomes in the *rímur*:

Þannig náði þengils bur
 þeirri borg sterkustu
 það um láð, er þjóð til spur,
 og þar með rammyggustu.

 Skanderbeg þá skjöldungs nú
 skráðan stað gat fengið
 helveg kanna hárs um frú
 hann ljet Tyrkja mengið.

 Lengi stóð svo lítt á því,
 lofstír hreppti sannan,
 landsins borgir allar í
 einum hasti vann hann.

(In this way the prince gained the strongest citadel in that land, and the most strongly built known to man.

Skanderbeg was able to win this aforementioned place; he let the Turkish host experience hell on earth.

It didn't take long, [he] gained true glory; he took all the citadels in the country in a short time.)

Although the *rímur* follow the prose text point for point, there is one significant addition. This comes near the end, where the (apocryphal) story is inserted of how Skanderbeg was asked to send his sword to the Sultan, who desired to see the weapon which had killed so many Turks. Skanderbeg obliges, but neither the Sultan nor any man at his court is strong enough to wield the sword, causing the Sultan to pronounce it a fake. Receiving it back, Skanderbeg commented that he had only sent the sword and not the arm that wielded it. This anecdote — which gave rise to the expression, at one time apparently common in English, 'Skanderbeg's sword must have Skanderbeg's arm'²⁴ — is not present in Barleti, and hence not in Holberg nor in the Icelandic saga (or at least not in any of the extant manuscripts of the saga), so how it came to be in the *rímur* is hard to say. It occupies a mere three verses:

²⁴ See *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase & Fable*, 16th edn, revised by Adrian Room (London: Ward Lock, 1999), p. 1047; there was some discussion of the phrase in the pages of *Notes & Queries*, 7 (1853), 35, 143, 511–12.

Biðja lætur buðlungs kund
brandinn mæta hjer um stund
sjer að ljá um sókna hlað;
hann sagði já, og gjörði það.

Þó sterkur væri sjóli sá,
svoddan dör ei hræra má;
enginn heldur hans af þjóð
hnikars veldur sala glóð.

Skatnar þegar skila dör,
Skanderbeg þau greiddi svör:
Ljeði' eg sverð en arminn ei
odda njerðum stáls að þey.

([He] has the man asked to send the sword, to lend it to him for a while; he said yes, and did so.

Though the king was strong he was not able to wield such a sword, nor could anyone in his court handle it.

The men return the sword at once; Skanderbeg gave the answer: I lent the warriors the sword but not the arm.)

One possible source is the *Sandfærdige Beskrivelse* from 1709,²⁵ where the sword episode is related on pp. 75–77:

Eftertencklig er dette / at hand var saa sterck i sine Arme at hand med sin tunge Sabel udi et Hug kunde flecke en Karl fra Hovedet ned udi Sadlen / og med et Hug kunde hand en Karl i Livet afhugge. Hvorfore dend Tørckiske Keyser paa Tro og Love begierede af Scanderbeg / at hand vilde lade hannem see dend Sabel som hand pleyede at føre ude Striden. Som nu Scanderbeg skickede ham Sabelen / haver hand dend med største Forundring beskuet / og forsøgt om nogen var iblandt hans Folk som dend kunde føre

²⁵ The source for the Danish text, or at least that among the early versions of the anecdote known to me which this appears most to resemble, is Philippus Camerarius's *Operae horarum subcisivarum, sive meditationes historicae* (Frankfurt: [n.pub.], 1602–09), Centuria altera, cap. LXXVI, pp. 350–51: 'Georgii quoque Castrioti Epirotæ viri fortissimi facta infra attingemus, cuius gladium, quo in præliis veteretur; Mahometes Turcorum Imp. & ipsius hostis acerrimus, videre cupiit. Hunc quum Castriotus (qui à Turcis Ischenderbeg, id est dominus Alexander, vocatur; vnde vulgo Schanderbegus appellatur) ad eum, accepta cautione, Constantinopolim misisset; nemo tanti roboris in Turcia aula repertus fuisse dicitur, qui eo commode & perite vti potuerit, ita vt Mahometes remisso eo, veluti ad terrorem suppositio gladio se hostili animo & arte delusum esse renunciare iusserit. Cui Schanderbegus rescripsit, se bona fide & absque fuco doloue misesse acinacem suum, quo in præliis valide strenueque vteretur: verum manum & brachium suum quo medios Turcos | proscindere, transuersos diuidere, integrosque artus detruncare soleret, non misisse, sed sibi retinuisse. Id ipsum se mox re ipsa ostensurum. Quod & perfecit.' This is very much in need of further investigation, however.

og svinge / men der var ingen som med nogen vircklig *Effect* det kunde gjøre; Herpaa skikkede dend Tørckiske Keyser Scanderbeg sin Sabel tilbage igien / med disse Ord: Denne din / til mig udskickede Sabel / er aldrig førdt af dig eller dine udi Marcken / thi det er umueligt at nogen Menniske kand føre eller svinge saadan en Sabel / og troer Jeg aldrig at du i alle dine Dage dend haver ført.

Scanderbeg lod ved Legaten hannem sige: Jeg haver paa Tro og Love efter hans Begiering skicket hannem dend samme Sabel som jeg pleyer at føre udi Marcken / men dend Arm og Haand som Sablen haver ført / haver jeg icke skicket hannem; vil dog (næst Guds Hielp) lade hannem med det første see / ey alleene samme Sabel / men end og dend Haand er hannem fører / som skal gjøre hannem mangel paa Sadel tom.

(It is notable that he was so strong of arm that he could with his heavy sabre split a man in two from the head down to the saddle with one blow, or hew a man in twain at the waist. For this reason the Turkish Sultan requested of Skanderbeg that he be allowed to see the sabre which he was wont to use in battle. When Skanderbeg sent the sword to him he marvelled at it and tested whether there were any among his people who could wield it, but there was no one who could do so with any effect. At this the Turkish Sultan returned Skanderbeg's sword to him with these words: This sword which you have sent to me has never been carried by you or any of your men in the field, for it is impossible that any person could wield such a sabre and I cannot believe that you in all your days have ever used it.

Skanderbeg had the messenger say to him: I have honourably in accordance with his request sent him the same sabre as I am wont to use in the field, but I have not sent to him the arm and the hand which has wielded it, but I shall (with God's help) let him at the first opportunity see not only the same sword but also the hand that wields it, which shall leave many a saddle of his empty.)

Conclusion

Looking at the reception of the story of Skanderbeg in Iceland it seems immediately to have become a part of the corpus of popular and semi-learned saga texts which circulated in nineteenth-century Iceland. One of Barleti's principal models for his life of Skanderbeg was Homer,²⁶ and the epic quality of the narrative, even in Holberg's pared-down version, meant that Skanderbeg could without difficulty take his place alongside *Starkaðr gamli*, *Friðþjófur frækni*, and *Sigurður þøgli*. The only thing I can imagine an Icelandic audience might have felt to be lacking were the extensive battle descriptions so characteristic of the romances. There are, to be sure, battle scenes a-plenty in Barleti, but Holberg, ironically enough, chose to omit them.

²⁶ Skaft-Jensen, 'En heltehistorie'.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MARGARET CLUNIES ROSS'S PUBLICATIONS

compiled by Anna Hansen

1970

'A Note on *Atlakviða* 16, 9–10', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 3, 63–65.

'A Suggested Interpretation of the Scene Depicted on the Right-hand Side of the Franks Casket', *Medieval Archaeology*, 14, 148–52.

1971

'A Survey of Courses in Old Icelandic Offered by Universities in Australia and New Zealand', *ANZAMRS Bulletin*, 7, 18–21.

1973

'Hildir's Ring: A Problem in *Ragnarsdrápa*', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 6, 75–92.

1977

'Women in Early Scandinavian Myth and Literature', *Refractory Girl*, 13–14, 29–37.

1978

'The Art of Poetry and the Figure of the Poet in *Egil's saga*', *Parergon*, 22, 3–12; reprinted in *Sagas of the Icelanders: A Book of Essays*, ed. by J. Tucker (New York: Garland, 1989), pp. 115–30.

'The Myth of Gefjon and Gylfi and its Function in *Snorra Edda* and *Heimskringla*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 93, 149–65.

'The Structure of Arnhem Land Song Poetry', *Oceania*, 49, 128–56.

(with L. R. Hiatt) 'Sand Sculptures at a Gidjingali Burial Rite', in *Form in Indigenous Art*, ed. by P. J. Ucko (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies), pp. 131–46.

1980

(film with K. I. McKenzie, film-maker, and L. R. Hiatt, anthropological advisor) *Waiting for Harry*, 57 mins., 16mm., colour (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies). [In

1982 this film was awarded first prize in the biennial ethnographic film competition of the Royal Anthropological Institute, London, and a special prize at the Luchon (France) film festival in the same year.]

1981

'An Interpretation of the Myth of Þórr's Encounter with Geirrøðr and his Daughters', in *Speculum Norrœnum: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. by Ursula Dronke, Guðrún Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Odense: Odense University Press), pp. 370–91.

'Style and Authorial Presence in Skaldic Mythological Poetry', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 20, 276–304.

1982

(with Stephen A. Wild) *Djambidj: An Aboriginal Song Series from Northern Australia* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies).

1983

'Modes of Formal Performance in Societies Without Writing: The Case of Aboriginal Australia', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1, 16–26.

'Snorri Sturluson's Use of the Norse Origin Legend of the Sons of Fornjótr in his *Edda*', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 98, 47–66.

'Two Aboriginal Oral Texts From Arnhem Land, North Australia, and their Cultural Context', in *Words and Worlds: Studies in the Social Role of Verbal Culture*, ed. by Stephen Knight and S. N. Mukherjee, Sydney Studies in Society and Culture, 1 (Sydney: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture), pp. 3–30.

1984

(with Stephen A. Wild) 'Formal Performance: The Relations of Music, Text and Dance in Arnhem Land Clan Songs', *Ethnomusicology*, 28, 209–36.

1985

'Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England', *Past and Present*, 108, 3–34.

'The Influence of the Medieval Encyclopedia on Snorri's *Edda*', *The Sixth International Saga Conference*, 28.7–2.8.1985: *Workshop Papers* (Copenhagen: Det Arnamagnæanske Institut), 1, 177–206.

1986

'Australian Aboriginal Oral Traditions', *Oral Tradition*, 1, 231–71.

'Concepts of Truth and Falsehood, Fair Description and Misrepresentation in Medieval Icelandic Writings', in *Language, Semiotics, and Ideology*, ed. by Elizabeth Grosz, Michael Halliday, Gunter Kress, and Terry Threadgold, Sydney Studies in Society and Culture, 3 (Sydney: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture), pp. 61–73.

'Documentation and Notation of Aboriginal Theatrical Performances', in *Proceedings of a Workshop on the Documentation and Notation of Theatrical Performances*, ed. by Gay McAuley,

- Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture: Working Papers, 1 (Sydney: Sydney Association for Studies in Society and Culture), pp. 37–54.
- ‘Rom in Canberra’ (Part I, Ch. 3), ‘Rom: The Ritual Objects’ (Part II), and ‘Rom: The Bark Paintings’ (Part III), in *Rom: An Aboriginal Ritual of Diplomacy*, ed. by Stephen A. Wild (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies), pp. 33–54, 55–99.
- ‘Two Aboriginal Oral Texts from Arnhem Land’, *Oral Tradition*, 1, 446–56.
- (with B. K. Martin) ‘Narrative Structure and Intertextuality in Snorri’s *Edda*: The Example of Þórr’s Encounter with Geirröðr’, in *Structure and Meaning in Old Norse Literature: New Approaches to Textual Analysis and Literary Criticism*, ed. by John Lindow, Lars Lönnroth, and Gerd Wolfgang Weber, Viking Collection, 3 (Odense: Odense University Press), pp. 56–72.

1987

- ‘*Fimm líkamsins vit*: The Development of a New Lexical Set in Early Norse Christian Literature’, *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 102, 198–205.
- ‘Research into Aboriginal Songs: The State of the Art’, in *Songs of Aboriginal Australia*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Tamsin Donaldson, and Stephen A. Wild, Oceania Monograph, 32 (Sydney: Oceania Publications), pp. 1–14.
- Skáldskaparmál: Snorri Sturluson’s Ars Poetica and Medieval Theories of Language*, Viking Collection, 4 (Odense: Odense University Press).
- (co-ed. with Tamsin Donaldson and Stephen A. Wild) *Songs of Aboriginal Australia*, Oceania Monograph, 32 (Sydney: Oceania Publications).

1988

- ‘Holding on to Emblems: Australian Aboriginal Performances and the Transmission of Oral Traditions’, in *Who Needs the Past? Indigenous Values and Archeology*, ed. by Robert Layton (London: Unwin Hyman), pp. 162–68.
- ‘Voice and Voices in Eddaic Poetry’, in *The Seventh International Saga Conference, Spoleto, 4–10 September 1988, Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Preprints* (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi Sull’Alto Medioevo), pp. 43–54.
- (with Johnny Mundrugmundrug) *Goyulan the Morning Star: An Aboriginal Clan Song Series from North Central Arnhem Land* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).
- [sound recording] *Goyulan the Morning Star*, singers Johnny Mundrugmundrug and Jack Riala. Companion cassette to item above (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press).

1989

- ‘The Cognitive Approach to Skaldic Poetics, From Snorri to Vigfússon and Beyond’, in *Úr Dölum til Dala: Guðbrandur Vigfússon: Centenary Essays*, ed. by Rory McTurk and Andrew Wawn, Leeds Texts and Monographs, 11 (Leeds: University of Leeds), pp. 267–86.
- ‘On *Waiting for Harry*: The Aesthetics and Politics of an Arnhem Land Ritual’, *Drama Review*, 33, 107–27.
- ‘Two of Þórr’s Great Fights’, in *Studies in Honour of H. L. Rogers*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes and D. A. Lawton, special issue, *Leeds Studies in English*, 20, 7–28.
- ‘Why Skaði Laughed: Comic Seriousness in an Old Norse Mythic Narrative’, *Maal og Minne*, 1–14.

1990

- 'The Anglo-Saxon and Norse Rune Poems: A Comparative Study', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 19, 23–39.
- 'Introduction', in *Medieval Icelandic Fiction and Folktale*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes, Margaret Clunies Ross, and Judy Quinn, special issue, *Parergon*, 8, 1–4.
- '*Íslendinga saga* as Family History', *Frá Suðlegri Strönd (From a Southern Shore)*, 3 [1987], 73–84.
- 'Some Anbarra Songs', in *The Honey-Ant Men's Love Song and Other Poems*, ed. by R. M. W. Dixon and Martin Duwell (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press), pp. 20–27 and 28.
- 'Voice and Voices in Eddic Poetry', in *Poetry in the Scandinavian Middle Ages: Atti del 12° Congresso Internazionale di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo*, ed. by Teresa Pàroli (Spoleto: Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo), pp. 219–30.

1991

- '*Mikil skynsemi er at ríffa vandliga þat upp*: A Response to Klaus von See', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society, Notes and Reviews*, 22 [1990], 73–79.
- 'Pseudo-Procreation Myths in Old Norse: An Anthropological Approach', in *Social Approaches to Viking Studies*, ed. by Ross Samson (Glasgow: Cruithne Press), pp. 35–44.
- 'Pseudo-Procreation Myths in Old Norse: An Anthropological Perspective', in *On the Generation and Maintenance of the Person: Essays in Honour of John Barnes*, special issue, *Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 1 [1990], 147–58.
- (trans. by Árni Sigurjónsson) 'Skáldskaparfræði Snorra Sturlusonar í ljósi latnesks lærdóms' [Snorri Sturluson's poetics in the light of Latin learning], *Tímarit Máls og Menningar*, 3.91, 3–10.

1992

- 'Mythic Narrative in Saxo Grammaticus and Snorri Sturluson', in *Saxo Grammaticus: Tra storiografia e letteratura: Bevagna, 27–29 settembre 1990*, ed. by Carlo Santini (Rome: Il Calamo), pp. 47–59.
- 'The Mythological Fictions of *Snorra Edda*', in *Snorrastefna. 25.–27. júlí 1990*, ed. by Úlfar Bragason, Rit Stofnunar Sigurðar Nordals, 1 (Reykjavík: Stofnun Sigurðar Nordals), pp. 204–16.
- 'Snorri's *Edda* as Medieval *Religionsgeschichte*', in *Germanische Religionsgeschichte: Quellen und Quellenprobleme*, ed. by Heinrich Beck, Detlev Ellmers, and Kurt Schier (Berlin: de Gruyter), pp. 633–55.
- 'Women and Power in the Scandinavian Sagas', in *Stereotypes of Women in Power: Historical Perspectives and Revisionist Views*, ed. by Barbara Garlick, Suzanne Dixon, and Pauleen Allen (New York: Greenwood), pp. 105–19.

1993

- 'Bragi Boddason', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 55–56.
- 'The Development of Old Norse Textual Worlds: Genealogical Structure as a Principle of Literary Organisation in Early Iceland', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 92, 372–85.

- 'Eilífr Goðrúnarson', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 157–58.
- 'Fornafn', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 205–06.
- 'Heiti', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 279–80.
- 'Úlfr Uggason', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 681–82.
- 'Up the Creek Without a Paddle: A Response to Lotte Motz's "Þórr's River Crossing"', *Saga-Book*, 23, 490–95.
- 'Þjóðólfr of Hvin', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 665–66.
- (with Rudolf Simek) 'Encyclopaedic Literature', in *Medieval Scandinavia: An Encyclopaedia*, ed. by Phillip Pulsiano and others (New York: Garland), pp. 164–66.

1994

- 'Anbarra People of Arnhem Land, Cockatoo, Wild Honey, Crow', in *The Oxford Book of Australian Religious Verse*, ed. by Kevin Hart (Melbourne: Oxford University Press), pp. 3–5. [Reprint of parts of *Djambidj: An Aboriginal Song Series from Northern Australia* (1982)].
- 'Dance and Narrative Among the Anbarra', in *Dance and Narrative: The Green Mill Dance Project Papers 1994*, ed. by Hilary Trotter (Canberra: Australian Dance Council), pp. 83–86.
- 'Introduction', in *Old Norse Studies in the New World*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes, Margaret Clunies Ross, and Judy Quinn (Sydney: Department of English, University of Sydney), pp. 1–2.
- 'Myth and Society in *Íslendinga saga*', in *Preprints of the Ninth International Saga Conference, Akureyri, Iceland, 31 July–6 August 1994* (Reykjavík: International Saga Society), pp. 674–88.
- 'Old Norse Studies in Sydney – a History', in *Old Norse Studies in the New World*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes, Margaret Clunies Ross, and Judy Quinn (Sydney: Department of English, University of Sydney), pp. 3–16.
- 'Percy and Mallet: The Genesis of *Northern Antiquities*', in *Sagnaþing helgað Jónasi Kristjánssyni sjötugum 10. apríl 1994*, ed. by Gísli Sigurðsson, Guðrún Kvaran, and Sigurgeir Steingrímsson, 2 vols (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska bókmenntafélag), I, 107–17.
- Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society*, vol. 1: *The Myths*, Viking Collection, 7 (Odense: Odense University Press).
- 'Þórr's Honour', in *Studien zum Altgermanischen: Festschrift für Heinrich Beck*, ed. by Heiko Uecker (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter), pp. 48–76.
- (with Judy Quinn) 'The Image of Norse Poetry and Myth in Seventeenth-Century England', in *Northern Antiquity: The Post-Medieval Reception of Edda and Saga*, ed. by Andrew Wawn (Enfield Lock: Hisarlik), pp. 189–210.
- (co-ed. with Geraldine Barnes and Judy Quinn) *Old Norse Studies in the New World* (Sydney: Department of English, University of Sydney).

1995

- 'The Canon and its Critics: Introduction', and contribution to a panel discussion, 'Who Cares about the Humanities?', in *The Humanities and a Creative Nation: Jubilee Essays*, ed. by Harold Love (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities), pp. 125–130 and 273–74.

'Medieval Norse Mythological Texts and Modern Readers', in *Treasures of the Elder Tongue: Fifty Years of Old Norse in Melbourne*, ed. by Katrina Burge (Melbourne: Department of Germanic and Russian Studies, University of Melbourne), pp. 11–23.

'In memoriam Bjarne Fidjestøl 30 September 1937–9 February 1994, Colleague and Friend', *alvissmál*, 4 [1994], 93–94.

1997

'The Intellectual Complexion of the Icelandic Middle Ages: Towards a New Profile of Old Icelandic Saga Literature', *Scandinavian Studies*, 69, 443–53.

'Textual Territory: The Regional Dynamic of Medieval Icelandic Literary Production', *New Medieval Literatures*, 1, 9–30.

1998

'Aborigines of Arnhem Land', in *International Encyclopedia of Dance*, ed. by Selma Jean Cohen and others, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press), I, 223–24.

'Editing the Oral Text: Medieval and Modern Transformations', in *The Editorial Gaze: Mediating Texts in Literature and the Arts*, ed. by Paul Eggert and Margaret Sankey (New York: Garland), pp. 173–92.

'Land-taking and Text-making in Medieval Iceland', in *Text and Territory: Geographical Imagination in the European Middle Ages*, ed. by Sylvia Tomasch and Sealy Giles (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 159–84.

'Medieval Studies', in *Knowing Ourselves and Others: The Humanities in Australia into the 21st Century*, 2 vols (Canberra: Australian Research Council), II, 191–98.

The Norse Muse in Britain, 1750–1820, Hesperides, Letterature e Culture Occidentali, 9 (Trieste: Parnaso).

Prolonged Echoes: Old Norse Myths in Medieval Northern Society, vol. II: *The Reception of Norse Myths in Medieval Iceland*, Viking Collection, 10 (Odense: Odense University Press).

'Snorri's Edda as Narrative', in *Snorri Sturluson: Beiträge zu Werk und Rezeption*, ed. by Hans Fix (Berlin: de Gruyter), pp. 9–21.

1999

'Ancestral Songs: Understanding of Aboriginal Song since 1788' [the 1998 Annual Lecture, Australian Academy of the Humanities], *Proceedings of the Australian Academy of the Humanities*, 23, 93–113; also published in *First Peoples-Second Chance: The Humanities and Aboriginal Australia*, ed. by Terry Smith (Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities), pp. 81–103.

'From Iceland to Norway: Essential Rites of Passage for an Early Icelandic Skald', *alvissmál*, 9, 3–28.

'Revaluing the Work of Edward Lye, an Eighteenth-Century Septentrional Scholar', *Studies in Medievalism*, 9 [1997], 66–79.

(with Lars Lönnroth) 'The Norse Muse: Report From An International Research Project', *alvissmál*, 9, 55–72.

2000

- 'The Art of Fire – The Significance of Fire in the Traditional Aboriginal Performing Arts of Arnhem Land', in *Fire! The Australian Experience* [Proceedings of a Seminar held at the University of Adelaide, 30 September–1 October 1999] (Canberra: National Academies Forum), pp. 113–22.
- 'Introduction', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 1–7.
- 'The Conservation and Reinterpretation of Myth in Medieval Icelandic Writings', in *Old Icelandic Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 116–39.
- 'Medieval Iceland and the European Middle Ages', in *International Scandinavian and Medieval Studies in Memory of Gerd Wolfgang Weber*, ed. by Michael Dallapiazza, Olaf Hansen, Preben Meulengracht Sørensen, and Yvonne S. Bonnetain (Trieste: Parnaso), pp. 111–20.
- 'Women Skalds and Norse Poetics: Jörunn skáldmær's *Sendibitr*', in *Gudar på jorden: Festskrift till Lars Lönnroth*, ed. by Stina Hansson and Mats Malm (Stockholm: Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion), pp. 80–91.
- ed., *Old Icelandic Literature and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- (co-ed. with G. Barnes) *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society: Proceedings of the 11th International Saga Conference, 2–7 July 2000*, University of Sydney, 1 vol + supplement (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney, 2000)

2001

- 'Introduction' to Gerd Wolfgang Weber, *Mythos und Geschichte: Essays zur Geschichtsmythologie Skandinaviens in Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, Hesperides, Studies in Western Literature and Civilization, 11 (Trieste: Parnaso), pp. 1–9.
- 'Die Kunst Peter Hupfaufs und die nordische Mythologie' ['The Art Work of Peter Hupfau and Nordic Mythology'], in *Brücke zwischen Zeiten und Welten: Treahna Hamm und Peter Hupfau aus Australien*, ed. by Eva Ch. Raabe, Galerie 37.8 (Frankfurt am Main: Museum der Weltkulturen), pp. 19–90.
- 'The Skald Sagas as a Genre: Definitions and Typical Features', in *Skaldsagas: Text, Vocation, and Desire in the Icelandic Sagas of Poets*, ed. by Russell Poole (Berlin: de Gruyter), pp. 25–49.
- 'Thomas Percy's Translations of Skaldic Poetry', in *Sagnheimur: Studies in Honour of Hermann Pálsson on his 80th birthday, 26th May 2001*, ed. by Ásdís Egilsdóttir and Rudolf Simek, *Studia Mediaevalia Septentrionalia*, 6 (Vienna: Fassbaender), pp. 53–61.
- ed., *The Old Norse Poetic Translations of Thomas Percy*, Making the Middle Ages, 4 (Turnhout: Brepols).
- (with Lars Lönnroth) 'The Norse Muse: Report From an International Research Project', *alvissmál*, 9 [1999], 3–28; repr., revised and in Swedish translation as 'Den fornnordiska musan: Rapport från ett internationallt forskningsprojekt', in *Myter om det nordiska: Mellan romantik och politik, Vägar till Midgård*, 1 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press), pp. 23–58.
- (with Craig Ronalds) 'Thureth: A Neglected Old English Poem and its History in Anglo-Saxon Scholarship', *Notes and Queries*, 48, 359–70.

2002

- 'Preben Meulengracht Sørensen', *Saga-Book of the Viking Society*, 26, 100–03.
- 'Realism and the Fantastic in the Old Icelandic Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, 74, 443–54.
- 'Reading *Þrymskviða*', in *The Poetic Edda: Essays on Old Norse Mythology*, ed. by Paul Acker and Carolyne Larrington (New York: Routledge), pp. 177–94.
- '"Saint" Ásólfr', in *Germanisches Altertum und Christliches Mittelalter: Festschrift für Heinz Klingenberg zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. by Bela Brogyanyi and Thomas Krömmelbein (Freiburg: Hochschul), pp. 1–21.
- 'Sand sculptures' and 'Painting', in *Janara-Ceremony* [9-page text contributed to CD-Rom], *People of the Rivermouth: The Joborr Texts of Frank Gurrmanamana*, by Frank Gurrmanamana, Les Hiatt, and Kim McKenzie (Canberra: National Museum of Australia and Aboriginal Studies Press).
- (trans. by Marianne Thormählen) 'Närvaron och frånvaron av ritual i norrön-isländska medeltida texter' ['Ritual and its absences in Old Norse-Icelandic texts of the Middle Ages'], in *Plats och praxis: Arkeologiska och religionshistoriska studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*, ed. by Kristina Jennbert, Anders Andrén, and Catharina Raudvere, *Vägar till Midgård*, 2 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press), pp. 13–30.
- (with Diana Whaley, Kari Gade, Edith Marold, Guðrún Nordal, and Tarrin Wills) *Skaldic Poetry of the Scandinavian Middle Ages. Editors' Manual*, 2nd rev. edn (Sydney: Centre for Medieval Studies, University of Sydney).

2003

- 'An Anglo-Saxon Runic Coin and its Adventures in Sweden', *Anglo-Saxon England*, 32, 79–88.
- 'Christian Skaldic Rhetoric in Einarr Gilsson's *Selkolluvisur*', in *Scandinavian and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages: Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference Bonn/Germany, 28th July–2nd August 2003*, ed. by Rudolf Simek and Judith Meurer (Bonn: Hausdruckerei der Universität Bonn), pp. 90–98.
- 'Introduction', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark), pp. 7–15.
- 'Two Old Icelandic Theories of Ritual', in *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, ed. by Margaret Clunies Ross, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark), pp. 279–99.
- ed., *Old Norse Myths, Literature and Society*, Viking Collection, 14 (Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark).
- (with Tarrin Wills) 'The Skaldic Editing Project', in *Scandinavian and Christian Europe in the Middle Ages: Papers of the 12th International Saga Conference Bonn/Germany, 28th July–2nd August 2003*, ed. by Rudolf Simek and Judith Meurer (Bonn: Hausdruckerei der Universität Bonn), pp. 99–106.

2004

- 'Edward Thwaites', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), LIV, 732–33.
- '*Hofudlausn* and *Egils Saga*', *Notes and Queries*, 51, 114–18.

- 'Michael Maittaire', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XXXVI, 248–49.
- 'William Elstob', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XVIII, 337–38.
- (with Amanda J. Collins) *The Correspondence of Edward Lye*, Publications of the Dictionary of Old English, 6 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies).
- (with Amanda J. Collins) 'Edward Lye', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XXXIV, 849–51.
- (with Amanda J. Collins) 'Henry William Weber', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), LVII, 870–71.
- (with Amanda J. Collins) 'James Johnstone', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XXX, 402–03.
- (with Amanda J. Collins) 'Owen Manning', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), XXXVI, 504–05.
- (with Amanda J. Collins) 'Francis Wise', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press), LIX, 833–35.
- (with Jens Peter Schjødt) 'Disputats om "Initiation, liminalitet og tilegnelse af numinøs viden"', *Religionsvidenskabeligt Tidsskrift*, 45, 63–75.

2005

- 'Conjectural Emendation in Skaldic Editing Practice, with Reference to *Egils Saga*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 104, 12–30.
- 'Criticism and Literary Theory in Old Norse-Icelandic', in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. II: *The Middle Ages*, ed. by Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 345–60.
- 'Frequent Flyers in Old Norse Myth', in *Travel and Travellers from Bede to Dampier*, ed. by Geraldine Barnes (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press), pp. 79–96.
- 'Heusler and the English-speaking World', in *Germanentum im Fin de siècle: Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Studien zum Werk Andreas Heuslers*, ed. by Jürg Glauser and Julia Zernack, Studien zur Geschichte der Wissenschaften in Basel, NF, 3 (Basel: Schwabe), pp. 286–308.
- A History of Old Norse Poetry and Poetics* (Cambridge: Brewer).
- 'A Tale of Two Poets: Egill Skallagrímsson and Einarr skálaglamm', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 120, 69–82.

2006

- 'The Cultural Politics of the Skaldic Ekphrasis Poem', in *Medieval Cultural Studies: Essays in Honour of Stephen Knight*, ed. by Ruth Evans, Helen Fulton, and David Matthews (Cardiff: University of Wales Press), pp. 227–40.
- 'The Measures of Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspective', in *Old Norse Religion in Long-term Perspectives: Origins, Changes, and Interactions*, ed. by Anders Andrén, Kristina Jennbert, and Catharina Raudvere, *Vågar till Midgård*, 8 (Lund: Nordic Academic Press), pp. 412–16.
- 'Poet Into Myth: Starkaðr and Bragi', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 2, 31–44.

- 'Poetry and *fornaldarsögur*', in *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature; Sagas and the British Isles: Preprint Papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6–12 August 2006*, ed. by John McKinnell, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick, 2 vols (Durham: University of Durham, Centre for Medieval and Renaissance Studies), I, 180–87.
- 'Stylistic and Generic Definers of the Old Norse Skaldic Ekphrasis', Round Table paper delivered at *The Fantastic in Old Norse/Icelandic Literature; Sagas and the British Isles: 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6–12 August 2006* <www.dur.ac.uk/medieval/www/>

MEDIEVAL TEXTS AND CULTURES OF NORTHERN EUROPE

All volumes in this series are evaluated by an Editorial Board, strictly on academic grounds, based on reports prepared by referees who have been commissioned by virtue of their specialism in the appropriate field. The Board ensures that the screening is done independently and without conflicts of interest. The definitive texts supplied by authors are also subject to review by the Board before being approved for publication. Further, the volumes are copyedited to conform to the publisher's stylebook and to the best international academic standards in the field.

Titles in Series

Drama and Community: People and Plays in Medieval Europe, ed. by Alan Hindley (1999)

Showing Status: Representations of Social Positions in the Late Middle Ages, ed. by Wim Blockmans and Antheun Janse (1999)

Sandra Billington, *Midsummer: A Cultural Sub-Text from Chrétien de Troyes to Jean Michel* (2000)

History and Images: Towards a New Iconology, ed. by Axel Bolvig and Phillip Lindley (2003)

Scandinavia and Europe 800–1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence, ed. by Jonathan Adams and Katherine Holman (2004)

Anu Mänd, *Urban Carnival: Festive Culture in the Hanseatic Cities of the Eastern Baltic, 1350–1550* (2005)

Björn Bandlien, *Strategies of Passion: Love and Marriage in Medieval Iceland and Norway* (2005)

Imagining the Book, ed. by Stephen Kelly and John J. Thompson (2005)

Forms of Servitude in Northern and Central Europe: Decline, Resistance, and Expansion, ed. by Paul Freedman and Monique Bourin (2005)

Grant Risee? The Medieval Comic Presence / La Présence comique médiévale. Essays in Honour of Brian J. Levy, ed. by Adrian P. Tudor and Alan Hindley (2006)

Urban Theatre in the Low Countries, 1400–1625, ed. by Elsa Strietman and Peter Happé (2006)

Gautier de Coinci: Miracles, Music, and Manuscripts, ed. by Kathy M. Krause and Alison Stones (2006)

In Preparation

The Narrator, the Expositor, and the Prompter in European Medieval Theatre, ed. by Philip Butterworth

Essays in Manuscript Geography: Vernacular Manuscripts of the English West Midlands from the Conquest to the Sixteenth Century, ed. by Wendy Scafe